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FROM CHAOS TO CATHOLICISM

FROM CHAOS TO CATHOLICISM

BY

THE REV. W. G. PECK

ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει

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TO
FATHER AND MOTHER
WHO FIRST TOOK ME
TO CHURCH

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PREFACE

STUDENTS in all departments of intellectual, social and political life are beginning to assert that the long process of analysis, which for several centuries has controlled Western thought and activity, is now drawing rapidly to its close. Even amidst the disappointments of the Peace we cannot be insensible to the fact that an age is dying. Old things are passing away, and the storms and tumults of our time are the harbingers of some new creation. It may be that we are approaching a culmination in which it will be possible to combine, in a richer spiritual complex than has been known, some long dispersed factors of Christian civilization. The moment is one in which faith may be courageous. The most eager and inquiring of Christian men are feeling that in the perplexity and paralysis of the world there is a ground of hope. It seems that upon our rocking skies the Son of Man may come to create, if men so will, a new earth.

It is the writer's firm conviction that if fire from God is needed to fuse the disintegrated life of society, it must fall first upon the altars of the Church. Europe and the world need, above all things, a Church which shall display the clear sacraments of that divine social complex which is called the City

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of God. She must set forth the beauty of personal holiness and the strength of corporate loyalty. She must combine historic sense with progressive endeavour : prophetic utterance with priestly function : dogmatic assurance with intellectual honesty.

This book is intended to give further illustration to the principles set forth in *The Coming Free Catholicism*, and seeks to indicate the vital synthesis of thought and life which the scattered Churches of Christendom must achieve, if the guiding sign is to be given to men. The chapter devoted to the Free Catholic Movement must not be taken as an official account. It is a personal presentation, though based upon fairly intimate knowledge. The two shorter papers appearing at the end are added as showing the Free Catholic mode of combining loyalty to a particular denomination and loyalty to the Universal Church. It will be observed that they have been delivered to Methodist audiences. No riot occurred upon either occasion. And here let me record my gratitude for freedom which is so real that under its protection one may proclaim a renewed Catholicism as its true goal.

I have again to thank my brother for much valuable criticism and advice as the book has taken shape.

W. G. P.

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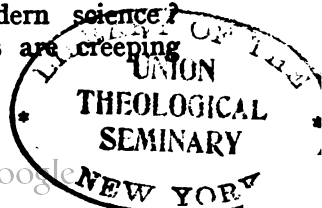
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I

CHAOS AND CATHOLICISM

SO swift are the movements and reactions of contemporary thought that already, with the possibility of a Catholic reconstruction now becoming faintly discernible, some voices are raised in wistful longing for the vanished days of scientific agnosticism. The dust begins to thicken upon the volumes written by Mr. Herbert Spencer, and some few people are rather cross about it. They grow sarcastic concerning what seems to them the purely perverse and reactionary direction of the most recent currents of religious thought. They sigh for those dear, dead days beyond recall when, as they tell us, two and two made four. They had not expected the developments which they now see taking place. They had confidently looked for what they called the further simplification of religion. Had not Catholicism been simplified once for all at the Reformation? And was not Protestantism itself in process of being simplified by modern science? But alas! superstition and darkness are creeping

II



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back, and those fine, agnostic intellects are disappointed.

They pine for the nineteenth century. They grow afraid of the great god Progress whom they once worshipped with honours. His sanctuary seems defiled and they neglect his altars. They fain would be back in the old glad time when it was perfectly certain that the religion of the future would be entirely reasonable and respectable. But that high Victorian noon has faded and its religious philosophy has gone the way of its horse-hair chairs. There is no use in pretending that the light of that day still fills our sky, because, as a matter of history, we remember the shades of evening which fell upon that yesterday, and we are distinctly aware of having got up the next morning.

There is one obvious fact which is occasionally overlooked, but which is of the utmost importance for the understanding of the present situation, and it may be expressed in the assertion that the nineteenth century ended, not with the year eighteen-ninety, but ten years later. This does not mean that we are to attach any superstitious value to arbitrary divisions of time, or to indulge in any of the out-moded language concerning the supposed characteristics of a *fin de siècle* period. The closing decade of the past century exhibited, indeed, a turmoil of tendencies. Upon the one hand there certainly was a decadence which was far more than a fashion of artistic and literary technique and affected the whole moral and social outlook; but on the other hand there was a release of new forces and a certain formless sense of new tasks, new

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opportunities. It was *the* time of transition ; but if, as upon some night in June, the fires had scarcely died in the Western sky before the morning was announced in the East, we must remember that a day had passed away, never to return.

There is no longer any pressing need to engage in academic discussion of the anti-religious presuppositions of scientific philosophy during the latter half of the nineteenth century, for their practical effects became patent in the closing decade. Those years took their tone and colour because of what had already happened. We are no longer swept off our feet by their cruder prophecies, nor are we now violently shocked by their special sins. We find ourselves able to speak of the *Yellow Book* without a blush. Zola is as dead as a door-nail. And Aubrey Beardsley's drawings cause us no excitement. Even Oscar Wilde is seen in proportion when viewed in connection with what preceded and with what has followed him.

This is not because we come to these men with a scalpel, to dissect and analyse and classify. We are able to approach them with sympathy and sometimes even with humour ; but we can no longer treat them as the heroic and inspired pioneers of a new age. We regard them rather as a number of gentlemen who completely missed their way under the firm conviction that they had just discovered a new realm for the soul's inhabitation. The years in which they flourished have been called " the naughty nineties," and there is reason in the nickname. They were " naughty " both relatively and absolutely, for while they scandalized many aunts and

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uncles, they went further and produced a tragedy of souls. They were naughty sometimes in the profound sense that they brought to naught the gifts and graces of genius. But it is a mistake to think of them as a period in which the public stage was entirely filled by an orgy of mere flippant obscenity and vileness. It is true that the incarnation of their essential spirit seems to be found rather in Wilde and Beardsley than either in William Morris who was growing old or in Bernard Shaw who was just commencing to grow young ; but even amongst the professed decadents there was something more than a tired and cynical disregard for life. They did not regard it as necessarily poor and absurd. If they were loftily contemptuous of the accepted life of the majority, they believed they were now free to discover new delights and to enjoy wild thrills of exotic experience. Small and even ridiculous as their adventure may now appear, it was undertaken by young men in a fever of desire and it was suffused by a sense of escape.

The decadents carried into more important provinces the revolt which their immediate predecessors, "the æsthetes," had proclaimed, and there can be no doubt that both movements were inspired by the desire for more vivid and stimulating experience, and that their adherents were athirst for some more potent draught of the wine of life than the customary modes and manners afforded them. Industrialism superimposed upon Protestantism failed to provide them with any adequate employment for their ardour. They wished to live passionately and gloriously, and they did well so to wish ; but unfor-

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unately the promise of glory and passion seemed necessarily to lie beyond the pale of Christian faith and morals. It must be admitted that the typical English Christianity of their day did not allow much scope for such flaming desires as theirs. Catholicism might have sufficed for their abandonment of respectability, for a Catholic may pray, "Blood of Christ, inebriate me," which is violent and corybantic, while the most conspicuous characteristic of British Protestantism at the close of the nineteenth century was that it was spiritually teetotal. But at the period of which we are speaking the common assumption of intellectuals was that the whole Christian system was irreparably damaged and its authority finally wrecked.

The science and philosophy of the century seemed to have completely divorced religion as a real enterprise of the soul from all the higher activities of humanity. It was taken for granted that serious minds could no longer be serious about Christianity in any form. But for those who made this assumption and were at the same time normally anxious to remain alive, the position became exceedingly difficult, for the simple reason that all spheres of spiritual and intellectual activity had long been dominated, consciously or unconsciously, by the Christian sanctions. Their art and their poetry must now necessarily be iconoclastic, and in the moral sphere they found only an open question. The apparent collapse of religious authority seemed to justify them in keeping it open, and their sense of escape is thus accounted for. But the problem of what was to be put in place of all the shattered

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idols was always more or less acute. Whither their steps would ultimately tend they often seemed not to consider ; and what it was they really proposed to discover is difficult to define. They did, however, believe that somewhere beyond the broken bounds there would be found ambrosial feasts for soul and sense, a greater intensity of existence ; and to search for such experience seemed at the time a sufficient venture.

They derived of course, partly from Swinburne, the herald of a neo-paganism which was to fill the earth with light and laughter after the death of the dark Christian virtues. They were sustained also, perhaps, by Pater and his insistence upon the intrinsic value of the vivid experience of the passing moment. " So to conduct one's life as to realize oneself—this seems to me the highest achievement possible to a human being." Thus Ibsen had written to Björnson long before. The dictum as stated might receive a completely Christian interpretation ; but Ibsen never intended it in the Christian sense.

The great thing (he wrote to George Brandes) is not to allow oneself to be frightened by the venerableness of an institution. The state had its roots in Time : it will have its culmination in Time. Greater things than it will fall. Neither the conceptions of morality nor those of art are eternal. To how much are we really obliged to pin our faith ? Who would vouch for it that two and two do not make five up in Jupiter ?

Already doubts are creeping in about two and two. It is not to be supposed that all the decadents of the nineties furnished forth their philosophy

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in this complete fashion, but such convictions certainly provided the background of their activities. Mr. Holbrook Jackson has a pointed comment upon this letter of Ibsen's and the relation of its attitude to that of the English decadents :¹

Those words were written as far back as 1871, but it took twenty years for their sense as expressed in the plays of Ibsen to be fully appreciated. By the middle of the Nineties the attitude was so much to the taste that many were quite ready to say, and in a way to prove, that it was not necessary to go as far as Jupiter to find two and two making five.

What we see is a subjectivity released from the social checks of the period; but, because of the prolonged destructive criticism which naturalistic philosophy had offered to the religious basis of spiritual values, and the entire absence of any fresh provision for the maintenance of moral authority, the young rebels of the moment were left without foothold. Extravagance and eccentricity and the love of being shocking—purely negative reactions—became their obsessions. And it must be recorded that they sometimes found that the pathway to the void carried travellers to dark, unholy places where manhood is dishonoured and its brave, pathetic decencies derided. They found, too, old age and death in life's young prime. There is an astonishing list of the genius and talent of the time cut off in their first flowering.² This fierce revolt, this unremitting and eventually painful search for the unattainable, this uncurbed liberty, exacted terrible

¹ Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties*, pp. 160, 161.

² *Idem*, p. 158.

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penalties. The newly exalted ego could only perish upon its throne. In their search for more life and fuller, these prematurely aged adventurers drank of enchanted waters and feasted sometimes at forbidden banquets ; but many of them at length came home. It is an arresting fact that the most brilliant and daring members of that unique group found their way to the Catholic Church and died in her arms. They came to her as to the Mother of Peace, having precious gifts for tired and wayward children. They came not without sacrifices of contrition. "Heine certainly cuts a poor figure beside Pascal," wrote Aubrey Beardsley, dying at twenty-six. "If Heine is the great warning, Pascal is the great example to all artists and thinkers. He understood that to become a Christian the man of letters must sacrifice his gifts, just as Magdalen must sacrifice her beauty."

These conversions, however, were not the herald of a Catholic revival. They were but striking illustrations of the truth that Catholicism is always the last resort of tired minds, and that is no great recommendation at the present time when the world needs beyond all things a fighting religion, a battle-cry, and a valiant captaincy. It is not alone because she has the gift of rest that the Church can call wandering men to her side ; but at the period when these conversions took place there seemed to be no other reason why men should pay heed to her. People believed that Newman and his companions had sought Catholicism as a shelter when they saw the clouds gathering. These new converts had come, drenched and buffeted by the storm ; but had Francis Thompson been then widely known,

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England would have seen the eternal Catholic whose religion is not only medicine for healing but also food for those who fight and love.

The Catholic Faith and order were still far from being accepted by the typical English intellect as being capable of providing any adequate social check to the newly released yearnings and purposes. When a young man decided to "be himself," to "test the possibilities of life," to "live out all his potentialities," the mentality of the period was unable to find in Catholic religion any cogent ground of warning or restraint. It was widely and sincerely believed that Christianity was an exhausted experiment. Its sanctions seemed impossible; and even when some of the most daring innovators in art and life had gone back to Catholicism, it was not likely that they would set a popular example. At the present moment there is, in all truth, little enough of positive religious conviction and clear faith, but the whole mental horizon has wonderfully changed within the past twenty years. In the days to which we are now alluding there was a steady stream of books written in calm assurance that Christianity had said its say and had been dismissed. In universities and colleges everywhere professors and tutors were generally found to be agnostics. The literary landscape was dominated by religious scepticism. Hugh Benson in his Catholic days could inform a correspondent that he had read Leslie Stephen and found him "silly." It is perfectly certain that the last thing in the world ever expected by solemn Victorian agnostics was that a young modern man would find them "silly"; and in the "nineties"

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they were considered to have spoken the last word. But even if they had demolished the Christian authority, they had put nothing in its place. Nobody had really proposed that readings from Spencer's *Principles of Ethics* should take the place of family prayers. They simply dropped the prayers.

The task had nevertheless to be faced, for the sake of social sanity. It was supposed that what was needed was a totally new basis of moral and social values, a new theory, a new ethos, by means of which the untrammelled spirit of the age could achieve its destiny. We can see now that it was a sorry quest. Christianity bases life's value upon the dogma that God has numbered the hairs of our heads and that the penitence of any broken man is considered good news by the angels in heaven. Scientific agnosticism must begin by basing life's value upon the dogma that we have no means of knowing whether the First Cause makes much distinction between babies and black-beetles. It did not promise a very gay conclusion ; but still, something had to be done. And so we find the "naughty nineties" becoming increasingly serious as they proceed, and we observe the search for a moral and social basis to replace the vanished sanctions of the supernatural.

It was unfortunate that few of the new prophets seemed to have any clear knowledge of what the Christian religion was. It is the surprising but perfectly plain truth, that most of the clever people who set about the task of improving upon Christianity simply did not understand Christianity. They did not know what it professed to do. They seem

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to have believed that its chief effect was anæmia. That they did not share its inward experience may be pardoned ; but it is somewhat strange that their philosophical presuppositions could so confuse their vision and distort their perspective. Their case is not explained by insisting upon their transparent honesty : it is only complicated.

In order that the profound ethico-social significance of Christianity may be understood, it is not necessary to consult the apologists and theologians. One may be satisfied to study the conclusions of so considerable a social philosopher as Mr. Benjamin Kidd. The main thesis of that writer's book, *The Principles of Western Civilization*, is that in the evolution of the human race the interests of the present are destined to become increasingly subordinated to the interests of the future. This domination of the present by the future is technically known as the principle of projected efficiency, and Mr. Kidd holds that it was introduced as the controlling factor in social evolution at the close of the classical period, with the appearance of Christianity in the world.

His argument runs along the following lines : The incessant waves of migration into the European lands, and the consequent strife and subsequent commingling amongst the various peoples, quite obviously took place under the sway of the principle of the domination of present interest. The whole structure of pagan society, together with its art and philosophy, was the result of the working out of that principle to its final issue. Its social application was the test of military efficiency and its cul-

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mination was in the Roman Empire. Now, this was a necessary stage, for only amongst peoples of proved vigour could the further principle of the suppression of present interests for the sake of the racial future be successfully introduced; but its introduction was not by way of the gradual liberalizing of the Roman standards. It is true that the *jus gentium* grew out of the *jus civile*; but the process was not one of true development but rather of retrogression. In all the apparent humanizing of pagan Rome, what we see is not the introduction of any new principle, but the old one in exhaustion and decay. The new principle came as an impact from supra-human sources. It was no mere human achievement, and this may be seen in the characteristic attitude of the earliest Christian believers :

The significance of the position here being developed is unmistakable. The fundamental concept which it involves . . . is nothing less than the expression for the time being, in the individual mind, of that larger principle of the evolutionary process, which, if we have been right in the position reached in the previous chapters, is destined in time to control all the phenomena of history. For, by the concept of the entire insufficiency of any conduct, however meritorious, and of the utter inability of the individual, in respect of his own nature, to rise to the standard of duty required of him, we see that we have now opened in the human mind an antithesis which it becomes impossible to bridge again in any scheme of ethics conceiving a self-centred equilibrium in the present time; or in any standard of duty in which virtue is made to correspond to conformity to the conditions of the existing world around us. There is involved, in reality, nothing less than the definite passing of the controlling centre of human consciousness out of the present. The only concept by which an equilibrium in such an antagonism can be again

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restored must involve, not only a rise of the individual consciousness to the cosmic ; but a sense of relationship to the cosmic as direct, as personal, and as compelling as any by which the human mind has hitherto been related to the present.¹

Mr. Kidd thus regards Christianity as being the introduction of an entirely new and uplifting principle into the evolution of the race, or at least as providing the historic vehicle of that principle, which essentially condemned the social structure with which it came into contact. In the persecution of the Church we see " nothing less than the pagan world instinctively standing at bay before a cause, the operation of which was absolutely incompatible with the life principle of every institution which was characteristic of it." ² So likewise in the Church's decisions against the early heresies we see the struggle to preserve the whole implications of the new principle.³

Now, whether this interpretation of Christianity in the light of social evolution is to be considered completely satisfying or not does not greatly concern us here. It is at best a somewhat cold-blooded account of the Gospel. It may be remarked, too, that there is a great difference between a Christian and an eugenist which does not seem sufficiently defined in Mr. Kidd's account. The important question is, however, whether or not history exhibits this contrast of dominant motives as between pagan civilization and Christendom. Some of the professed improvements upon the Christian basis of society show no consciousness of the existence of any such

¹ *Principles of Western Civilization*, p. 218.

² *Idem*, p. 230.

³ *Idem*, p. 216.

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question. They seem to indicate the view that Christianity was a confused and imperfect amalgam of beliefs and practices all alike due for the most part to the lamentable lack of scientific education in the ancient world. They entirely overlook the fact that ever since its birth Christianity has been fighting for its life. They assume that the imperfect expression of Christianity found in the course of history and in modern life is proof of its inadequacy, when it is obviously possible that it is proof of its real potency. If Christianity is really nothing less than the appointed road of man upon his pilgrimage to the City of God, it may well take our stumbling race long centuries to believe it. If it is a fundamental revolution of earthly values, it may reasonably remain unpopular for centuries. It may even lose ground from time to time and appear defeated and discredited. But the question is, What does it set out to perform? If it has operated to any extent in history, what is the direction of its influence? At any rate, if it is what Mr. Kidd supposes it to be, it must not be summarily dismissed at the bidding of any philosophical school, however fashionable for the moment. Still less may it be cheaply "accounted for."

Beyond all doubt, whatever other traits have characterized the Christian Gospel, it certainly has proclaimed in the most emphatic manner the founding of a new order of human society. It began not merely with haphazard preaching to the multitudes, but with the definite formation of a community. The Pauline teaching was that redemption incorporated men into fellow-citizenship with the saints.

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And the Apocalypse of St. John explicitly declares the ultimate issue to be in the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. This imagery of the heavenly city was probably drawn from Jewish sources ; but while later rabbinical theology had outgrown the notion that the earthly Jerusalem would be the centre of Messiah's Kingdom and now looked for the coming of the ideal Jerusalem from heaven, Christian thought seems to have used the conception of the heavenly city in no local sense. The New Jerusalem meant for Christians the redeemed society of men whose organ was the Church. That society was to take its rise from the supernatural force which had entered the world in Christ. It was regarded as a new birth of social organism, the embodiment of divine life ; and while its complete expression might never be found upon this earth, it was bound to make itself manifest upon the earth and to wrestle for mastery with the social order already established.

Whether the Christian basis of society is now to be considered obsolete depends partly upon whether the individual religious experience discovered in Christianity is proved to be worthless as a guide to the nature of human destiny. That experience, whether it comes with shattering suddenness or by slow development, is always seen upon reflection to contain a miraculous and apocalyptic element. This holds good in both Catholic and Evangelical testimonies. A Christian man is aware of the stupendous marvel of his salvation. "I was lost, and Jesus found me," is the witness of all genuine Christian experience, even when it has known no violent upheavals and no sudden conversion. And no man

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whose life has thus passed beneath the sway of the supernatural can ever become a thoroughly obedient member of a social order whose ultimate sanction is derived from purely natural sources ; and as we have already seen, and shall see again, the redemption of the individual carries direct social implications. Over against the City of Man the Christian faith sets the City of God, and for long centuries the doings of men and nations could always be ultimately judged in the light of the New Jerusalem. The whole conception has of course been challenged and criticized from time to time, but never previously with the vigour and apparent success with which it was assailed at the close of the nineteenth century. In face of the surprising consensus against the Christian authority the vision of the heavenly city seemed to be rapidly fading before the eyes of men, and the task of erecting a new sanction, a new centre of social cohesion, a new principle of ethical self-expression, became imperative.

Nietzsche had seen this and had made his desperate attempt to find the necessary foundation in a new order of personality whose own individuality should provide the ultimate ethical authority. There has been a great deal of wild nonsense talked about Nietzsche. His claim to be Antichrist has been taken all too seriously. He was simply struggling to express an alternative to natural and supernatural morality which does not exist, and he falls rather badly between two stools. A slight alteration of his angle of vision might have convinced him that the values which he despised had already been transvalued in the only possible manner, by Christ.

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Attempting to state the human ideal without social reference, he cannot help his superman almost turning into a saviour for sheer lack of anything else to do. His philosophy, however, defies all attempts at consistent presentation. Preaching salvation by the will to power, he also argues that superman will arise by heredity and emphasizes the importance of aristocracy. His nobility will be a nobility of blood, and it is therefore difficult to understand how the will to power is going to effect very much. But the whole doctrine of superman is vitiated because Nietzsche overlooked the fact that the primal characteristic of humanity is that it is always putting supermen in their place. That is the great *motif* of human history. Superman is not a wild dream, but only a dreary fact to be observed in many nurseries. And it may be added that in his more dramatic examples he seems to suffer from an unfortunate tendency to get himself beheaded. If he escapes any such fate, he usually ends by joining the Catholic Church. In fact, he was on the road to this even in Nietzsche's pages, for his supermen are allowed to enter into alliances amongst themselves—and thus to prove themselves thoroughly human and to start again all those human problems which the Church alone can solve.

But Nietzsche was not known in England before the dawn of the twentieth century, and here the approach was not made from his standpoint. The new basis was looked for in an increased regard for the social organism. John Davidson certainly was an exception to this in his defiance of all social ties and his denial of all morality. He would have none

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of Nietzsche's moralizing. He fairly went in for devil worship; but it is impossible to take him seriously because his devil persists in turning from time to time into a sort of hot-gospeller of the Purity League. Davidson has had little or no influence. The most widely read representatives of the movement toward a new moral and social theory in this country are Mr. George Bernard Shaw and Mr. H. G. Wells, but the genius and sincerity of both serve but to emphasize the confusion which falls on every system which proceeds upon naturalistic assumptions.¹

The Shavian social philosophy is often supposed to be a production of icy logic, but a close examination reveals it to be a very temperamental affair, built up by Mr. Shaw in alternate layers of hope and despair. Commencing with a strong apology for the individual, assumed to be helpless in the clutches of social environment, he proceeded to proclaim the need of unceasing struggle against the present social order, at which he flung glorious insults and noble abuse. But he did not succeed in explaining by whom the necessary struggle was to be waged; and seeing that the individual was helpless, the need of such explanation was obvious. Mr. Shaw was certainly very aggressive and valiant, but he did not fit in with this part of his philosophy. Later, however, he is found adhering to the doctrine that instinct is superior to any morality: which really means that the greatest hope for humanity is to be found in allowing every man to follow his own nose,

¹ A brilliant criticism of various modern alternatives to the Christian ethic is contained in *Conduct and the Supernatural*, by L. S. Thornton (Longmans, 1915).

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and abandons even the pretence of social theory. Nobody can even guess what sort of society sheer "instinct" might produce, because mankind has an incurable instinct to use his reason. But Mr. Shaw finally advises us that the only way of human salvation is in the breeding of supermen. This means that by yielding ourselves to the sway of the expert eugenicist and thus abrogating the central dignity of personality, we may expect to produce personality of transcendent quality. The fundamental disability of the Shavian philosophy is that it never shows any firm belief in the significance of the individual. Sometimes it preaches at the life-force and sometimes it holds forth to mankind at large; but it often seems doubtful as to whether any men in particular really exist. And with material so insignificant it is certainly impossible to construct in theory or practice a significant society.

Mr. Wells, on the other hand, commences with a wistful sort of faith in human nature. Indeed, his belief in man's perfectibility is almost pathetic. He may express strong feelings with regard to the folly of men, specially of those who do not agree with him, but one cannot accuse him of being a pessimistic superior person. He calls upon the common crowd to realize its latent possibilities and pours ridicule upon the notion that mankind has exhausted its possibilities; but the precise quality and content of the desired achievement is difficult to define. It seems to be expressed as social accommodation—a quantitative adjustment—and although Mr. Wells thinks that good will amongst men is essential, it is the ultimate social accommodation

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which is the end in itself, the real value and ideal content of life remaining problematic. He once wrote a moving passage in which he told how he had felt that if by suddenly sacrificing his life in the dark waters of London's river he could thrust one dead hand into a brighter world for humanity, he would gladly do it. But he has never given us any adequate assurance that men would not be equally glad to drown themselves to get out of the Utopia which he had so nobly purchased for them. He realized eventually that he had so far failed to provide any man with a reason for desiring to remain alive, and with customary energy he set about the task of defining the religious content of life. This attempt we shall presently examine; but, before this, he had not escaped from the *impasse* in which all theorizers labour in attempting to construct human society upon human nature conceived as entirely included within the natural sphere.

Such efforts can find no solution for the conflict of desires within the individual himself. They cannot ease the torment of a man's own personality. They are dumb before the problem of the two worlds in which man actually finds himself the moment he begins to reflect. They can produce neither a principle capable of harmonizing a man with himself, nor any intrinsic value capable of providing life with a sufficient motive. Even the attempt to explain human existence as a tragedy becomes silly when man is confined within the domain in which the worms also live and move and have their being. Man is tragic only if he is a being engaged in conflict upon a supernatural plane. As a passing manifesta-

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tion of creative energy he is not even comic, for even a monkey is ultimately comic only if the hairs of his back are all numbered. You cannot enjoy even the luxury of being pessimistic about man, unless you believe that he is a decayed gentleman going to the bad. If there is no such thing as a supernatural judgement of evil with which he is vitally concerned, it is absurd to take pessimistic views about him because it is absurd to take any views at all. Winwood Reade professed to show that mankind was a martyr. But a martyr who does not know, until he is told, why he is being martyred, or for what he is witnessing, is a fool. A martyr must be morally identified with the principle at issue ; and if man is being martyred for the purpose of God, he is necessarily a co-partner with the Eternal.

When the twentieth century had run some few troubled years of its course, it became evident that the non-religious solution was bankrupt. Serious people could hardly any longer believe that it was going to do anything. Meanwhile the practical situation was loudly clamouring for some reconciling power to be applied to the increasing disorder of human life. The snapping of the unseen tie which held men together in loyalty, had left the world in a plight of which the gravity was only now becoming apparent. Charges of moral rottenness began to be made against European and American society, while upon every side the struggle for material gain threw off all disguise and became more cynical and in some respects more brutal than ever. Combination amongst men seemed to become simply a means of gaining economic advantage and to abandon all

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pretence of spiritual significance. The thunders of the Great War drowned the noise of strife for a time, but with the coming of peace the astounding chaos of human affairs became only more clearly visible.

The loss of religion as a bond of corporate life did not, of course, involve the complete obliteration of the religious instinct, and throughout this period of confusion men were seeking in various quarters for some new solace for their anxiety of spirit. The rapid spread of Spiritualism is very significant, for it bears witness to a widespread disappointment with the provisions of the natural world. While the new prophets were promising Utopia, people were already investigating their chances of enjoying somewhere a house not made with hands. It had been fashionable to attack Christianity because of its otherworldliness (which was dismally misunderstood); but the people who had made those attacks were soon to be found discussing the latest gossip from "Summerland." There is no possible harm to the cause of religion in admitting that psychical research has provided evidence of the occurrence of phenomena which upon the whole seems best explained by the hypothesis of genuine communication. There is no need to declare that the serious investigation of scientists is nothing other than traffic with evil spirits. The harmful physical and moral effects which sometimes result from psychical experiment appear rather to show that while human nature possesses strange psychic elements, they are not intended to be normally engaged during our present existence.

But apart from these considerations, it is quite

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evident that Spiritualism cannot possibly provide any valid religious sanction. The mere proof of perpetuated personal existence establishes no inward, spiritual value in that existence. It does not necessarily enhance human dignity. It may even accentuate human futility. If a man is utterly bored by the prospect of living three-score years and ten, it does not come to him as an inspiring assurance that he is going to be similarly bored to all eternity. And it must be frankly stated that the alleged communications from "the other side" do seem to be unexciting. At any rate, it can solve no man's personal problem to know that his personal problem is unending. Nor does the mere fact of the perpetuation of individual life provide any principle of social cohesion. Spiritualism may indeed borrow some mild ethical teaching from other sources ; but though it assures a man that his grandfather is still a living, personal entity, it does not necessarily help him to serve the present age. The very fact of its popularity, while it declares the heartache of humanity, testifies also to social dissolution.

At the opposite extreme stand the Christian Scientists, intent upon utilizing spirit to cure the ills of the flesh. Here again, there is no need to bring a railing accusation. Christian Science witnesses for a fragment of Catholic truth ; but in isolation from the whole orb of dogma it becomes exaggerated, unbalanced and provincial. It has connected itself with a very dubious metaphysic and it is always in danger of becoming entirely sceptical. If consciousness cannot be trusted when it reports the existence of real pain and evil, it cannot

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long be trusted when it reports the existence of real pleasure and good. Christian Science is unsacramental and finds no place for the symbol. And if an enthusiastic lady convert learns to have doubts about what happened when the hammer struck her thumb, it may not be long before she begins to have doubts as to what happened when the wedding-ring was placed upon her finger. Moreover, the insistence of Christian Science upon therapeutics gives it a valetudinarian air ; and the likelihood of its ever accomplishing the relief of social chaos is too remote even for discussion. It is too suspiciously respectable to be believed in.

We are left with the extreme subjectivity of a variegated mob of spiritual adventurers who seem to imagine that the assertion of the ultimate identity of human individuality with the unchanging essence of all being is a cheerful solution of our problems and perplexities. So far as we are here concerned, it needs only to be pointed out that this unregulated subjectivism always solves the problem of social disloyalty and discord by assuming their ultimate non-existence. They are but the troubled dream of man yet amidst the shadows. When he emerges at length into the fuller radiance, and the theosophical far-off divine event takes place, there will be no more strife between men. In fact, that desired event will really consist of the destruction of both terms of a worrying antithesis. There will come a day when all the diplomats and politicians and trade-unionists will make a final bow and say, " Farewell, we lose ourselves in light." Society and the individual alike will collapse into the everlasting calm

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of undifferentiated unity ; and their immediate task is to deliver themselves as rapidly as possible from all that hinders this blessed consummation. This orientalism has undoubtedly invaded the tumultuous West in a remarkable manner in recent years. It is but the sublimation of despair ; and fortunately, the majority of us still prefer the bewildering rough and tumble of the world as it is, to the alternative here recommended.

Amidst the confusion of fragmentary hopes and beliefs which contained no promise for human society, it became evident that a restatement of the religious basis of society was urgently needed. Life without it promised soon to reach an inextricable tangle ; but so far nothing had been done to replace the banished dogmas of Christianity. The spectacle of the world war nevertheless found some observers with sufficient vision to see more than the jeopardy of their own country's pride and prosperity and to behold the human race gripped in one comprehensive and horrible agony. But the movements of thought and life during the previous century had now made it certain that no confidence in the destiny of the race could be securely established unless its tragedies and lapses could be reconciled with a purpose, friendly to men, if not yet entirely comprehended by present human knowledge. At the same time the quest for reality had apparently brought the philosophy of the Absolute into disrepute. Certainly, at least, no resolution of human disasters and contradictions in the experience of the Absolute seemed capable of giving any satisfaction to the disquieted hearts of men. This was the situation

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when Mr. Wells essayed to crystallize the modern religious yearning in his book, *God the Invisible King*.

That work was unfortunately marred by much sheer spitefulness against Christianity, though some cynics might observe that this *odium theologicum* is sound proof that Mr. Wells is truly religious. The sincerity of the book, however, does not conceal the utter incoherence and futility of the proffered faith. We are asked to believe in a Saviour God, the Captain of the race, who is humanity and more. He is the leader of mankind in its amazing adventure and he is ever seeking our co-operation in the task of developing and establishing humanity. But he is not the Creator. The creative source is still a blank mystery—Veiled Being, and for all we may know, our God may be a rebel against Veiled Being. The Captain of the race is obviously nothing but a tribal god, and the fact that he is the leader of the whole human tribe does not add to his essential dignity.

Now, the first radical impossibility in this thesis is quickly discovered. If Veiled Being has created mankind so that its highest good is found in obedience to its Captain, there cannot be this entirely doubtful and possibly antagonistic relation between our God and the creative source, nor can we justly profess entire ignorance of the nature of that source. At any rate, the veil is not quite opaque. In the second place, as Mr. Wells refuses to admit the religious necessity of personal immortality, it would seem that the final value of the human enterprise is to be realized only by God and not by man, and that humanity is but a temporary instrument for this

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end. This simply carries us back to all the difficulties of the most bloodless and abstract absolutism, without providing any of its advantages ; for as Mr. Wells' God is not absolute and not the Creator, and possibly a rebel against the Creator, he too may be doomed to extinction. He may be only the temporary instrument for the self-realization of Veiled Being. The whole value of human life therefore is seen to rest on nothing at all, and Mr. Wells is eventually found to have attempted to provide a religious basis which still does not admit the supernatural as the fundamental factor. This is clear in his treatment of the problem of human destiny. He holds out delightful hopes that our remote descendants will colonize other planets and control the sun. He understands that the earth may pass away ; but if he is reminded that the sun also may pass away and the lust thereof, he has nothing more to say. The end of man is destruction. And yet, futile as is all this speculation, it does seem to cry with a strong voice that the disloyalty and disruptive egoism of our race which reduce our glory to shame and damn us socially and individually, can be reconciled only in a superhuman sphere and by the direct operation of supernatural agency.

It is not surprising that in these circumstances there should arise premonitions of a Catholic revival. Only to superficial or prejudiced minds will this seem an unwarranted or reactionary development. It has become manifest that the main alternatives now confronting the world are Christianity and secularism. The latter usually associates with itself a profession of ardent humanism and a crusading

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zeal for social reform ; but we have already seen that it fails to discover any adequate value in human existence and has no power to bring men into any fine and enduring sodality. But if the Christian Faith is now delivered by the progress of science and philosophy from the contempt beneath which it recently laboured, if it is shown to provide at least a possible view of God and the world, much more is still required before it can again exert a dominant and truly constructive influence upon the world's life. It has to show its dual power of liberating the individual and unifying human society, and Catholicism most certainly appears to be the interpretation of Christianity best fitted for the accomplishment of this task. Leaving aside for the moment all questions of its faithfulness to primitive Christian usage, the proposition is arguable upon the ground of present and patent human need.

The Christian doctrine of supernatural redemption is not the purely individualistic Gospel which evangelical Protestantism has often represented it to be. Care must here be taken to avoid misunderstanding, for it would be absurd to assert that evangelical Protestantism has never exhibited a blazing passion for human salvation. Apart from the Methodist revival in England, which is sometimes held to have displayed clear Catholic traits, Protestants have often suffered and sacrificed in order that the cold, unheeding world might know Christ. We are not denying this. Our assertion is that Protestantism has never sufficiently emphasized the gospel truth that redemption itself involves the integration of the individual into the redeemed society and that

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without this there is no full salvation. One does not assert that the principle is entirely foreign to Protestants; but they tend to consider the purely religious process as culminating in the reconciliation of God and the individual sinner; and this is not the full Christian truth. It depends upon a partial and selective reading of the New Testament, and while under its influence the converted sinner may feel impelled to preach to others, it provides him with no vital sense of his organic relation with others in a new, transcendent social order.

Religious psychology teaches that the liberating of the individual, the emancipation of the soul that it may live its full, unfettered life, is never accomplished but by personal surrender. In fact, all social life, even upon the natural plane, involves some such surrender before the most rudimentary civilization becomes possible; but it is just the whole human problem that no natural authority, no state, or community, or class, can by itself provide full sanction for the utter surrender of the sacred personality of man. That is why civilizations have always sought to establish themselves upon religious sanctions; but it also reveals why the accomplishment either of individual salvation or social solidarity is impossible upon the natural plane. Christianity, like other religions, claims to bring men to God; and it certainly emphasizes the personal relation of each single soul with the Heavenly Father. Nor can the confident and triumphant Christian conviction be precisely matched in any other religious system. The Christian man has found God as no other man has ever done. Whether in the majestic chorus of

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the *Te Deum*, in the fiery radiance of Wesley's hymns, or the magnificent assertion of the Mass, Christian experience displays a conquering confidence in the supernatural which is unique. The Gospel does bring men to peace and to finality. But so far as we have yet stated the case, this might involve no more than religious individualism.

We have, however, only to consider for a moment, in order to see wherein Christianity is entirely differentiated from individualism of any sort. The Christian finds God, but in such conditions as involve human solidarity. At the very moment when he finds God, he discovers not only himself, but every one else. For he finds God incarnate—the lowly babe, the toiling carpenter, the dying man upon a cross. He finds God made man, within the historical human fellowship. And if he finds here salvation, it must be a salvation which lifts him into a new sociality and involves the re-organization of the entire human relationship upon a new plane.

If it be asked where the historic evidence of this may be found, the answer is that it is the Church which reveals, at least in her essential meaning and by the holy rationale of her sacraments, this corporate life of the redeemed. She is the living nexus of humanity unified in a supernatural experience. But it is undeniable that this is the Catholic doctrine of the Church. There are some Protestants who claim the Catholic name simply because they believe the basic facts of Incarnation and Atonement, and there is a loose and somewhat useless sense in which they may be justified. The things that constitute Catholicism, they say, are few and central. But to

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suppose that these few things exhaust the whole of what is vital in Catholicism is deliberately to blind oneself. There is a definite, historical Catholic view of what is involved by Incarnation and Atonement ; and Catholicism displays constantly the organic conception of human redemption.

It is scarcely necessary to point out how completely relevant is this conception at the present time and how that for lack of it society seems ready to fall to pieces. Protestantism in its naked outline provides no exemplification of the inherent socializing power of the Gospel. It simply does not recognize the integral position of the Church in the very plan of salvation and it is not surprising therefore that modern industrialism with its fierce and disruptive rivalries arose first in Protestant lands. And the Calvinism which attempted to correct this Protestant fault has vanished.

It is interesting to notice that modern conversions to the Roman Church have taken place for apparently quite opposite reasons. Bourget and Albert de Mun, for example, have regarded the Church as the great bulwark against European revolution ; but Péguy accepted her as publishing the true charter of socialism. Modernism has been described as *il cattolismo rosso*, but there are some who assert that all catholicism is "red." It is possible that this seeming contrariety is due not to hopeless confusion, but simply to the apprehension of different aspects of one solid truth. Catholicism is "red." The Roman Church proudly declares that the first Bishop of Rome was St. Peter himself, who happens to have been a working man. It is impossible to conceive a much

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more violent inversion of ordinary social standards than is implied in that assertion, even though Rome has often enough denied it in practice. At the same time the Church is the enemy of disorder and chaos, because she is the type and ground of true social harmony, and opens her arms to bid men enter a fellowship in which all men shall be brothers because they have become the reconciled sons of God.

It is imagined by some militant Protestants that however valuable and appealing this conception of the Church may be, the Catholic mode of presenting it must be utterly wrong, because it carries with it teaching and practice which they themselves happen to find distasteful. Priesthood, confession, the invocation of saints—these things, they declare, have nothing to do with Christianity. But how do they know? There can be no valid Protestant criticism of Catholic practices until Protestantism attempts to do the thing which Catholicism tries to do. Until then, Protestantism cannot say what is necessary for the maintenance of the organic conception of redemption. This, however, does not involve the acceptance of every element which happens to accompany actually existing Catholicism. It does not, for example, involve the Roman doctrine of the Papacy, because it is easy to point to Catholicism whose genuineness is beyond dispute, which yet does not accept the Papacy. But, on the other hand, many of the devotional practices of Catholicism and its liturgical characteristics cannot be separated from its vital being, because they have grown up as the fruit of practical religious experience in the

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Church, sometimes even in the teeth of authority, and they exist in all historic Catholicism.

But not only in its conception of the Church does Catholicism bear witness to the social implications of the Christian Faith. In its sacramental system also it emphasizes the corporate nature of human salvation. It goes without saying that high sacramental teaching gives a definite and indeed a glorious interpretation of the dogma of Incarnation ; but one of its most important elements is to be found in the fact that it sets forth the permanent connection between what happened at Bethlehem and Calvary and the common relationship of men. It symbolizes the establishment of the true organic society at the point where God Himself takes material substance as the culminating mode of His Self-revelation. It declares that the world is saved only by the Word being evermore made flesh. It lifts worship out of all the perils of exclusive subjectivity by finding in common bread and wine the very vehicle of the Holiest and the embodiment of Christ's actual presence. The doctrine of transubstantiation does attempt to state this precious truth ; but Zwinglianism never approaches it, and Protestantism has unfortunately tended to solve its sacramental problem by a gradual drift toward the Zwinglian conception. Protestants will now commonly affirm that they do apprehend the Presence of Christ *at* the Sacrament, if not *in* it, and even that at the Lord's Supper they apprehend the Presence of Christ in some specially vivid manner. But the Sacrament still remains a stimulus to their own individual experience and carries no further logical implication.

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To reach those further implications which alone give Holy Communion its valid centrality in the Church's devotion, one is bound to adopt the Catholic attitude—not necessarily the metaphysic of transubstantiation, but at least the faith that Christ Himself so employs the elements that in a mystical and yet perfectly definite and real sense they become the Body and Blood of His unifying and healing Manhood.

The value of this high sacramental faith is not exhausted by the passionate personal attachment to Christ which it certainly nourishes in the individual. Living in the body, those who can come as little children are bound to experience a fierce and holy joy before the personal symbol of the Redeemer. Those of us who know, must not hesitate to testify that it is as though Christ Himself had placed a loving hand upon us and as though His dear lips had been pressed upon our brows. But there is still more significance in this sacramental confidence. We know that Christ is conveyed to all who kneel with us at the altar. Protestants, of course, regard the objectivity of Christ in their spiritual exercises as certain, just as Catholics so regard Christ as really present in their mental prayer; but the Catholic Sacrament objectively sets forth Christ's coming to the whole fellowship. Here is the socializing power of Holy Communion. It leaves a man ultimately confronted with the testimony and the claims of a Lord who stands before all men. It is the normal completion of the inward, quietistic method of devotion. No prayer-meeting, however uplifting, can possibly perform this sacramental function. Here

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Christ meets us precisely where we all meet each other. The objective Sacrament becomes the transcendent ground of a new social synthesis. Those who eat the flesh of the Son of Man together, have themselves become one flesh in a mystical marriage. He who drinks the blood of God is the confessed blood-brother of all the sons of men. Holy Communion is thus the profoundest rite of the Christian revolution.

But this Sacrament is fundamentally evangelical. It demands passionate personal intention. It pleads before the throne of the Most High the one Sacrifice of Christ for the sake of men. He who draws near, must come penitently, meekly kneeling upon his knees. But there is no unethical presentation of atonement here possible ; no thought of a substitution which leaves moral disposition unaffected. The Sacrament identifies celebrant and communicants with Christ's own sacrifice, binding the whole Church into a sacrificial life in union with her Lord. The divisions of society are healed and the noise of the world's ancient wars is hushed at the holy table. Here is precious commonalty and the offering of each for all, of all for each.

Moreover, clear sacramental teaching transforms the face of the earth and affects the whole import of human activity. If bread and wine may enshrine the Son of God, we may no longer put to base ends the rest of the material universe from which they have been sacramentally detached. The green earth and the daily work of labouring men become illumined with supernatural meaning. We see that visible things exist only to embody a life which,

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although essentially above them, seeks to live within them, moulding them to proclaim its own lovely meaning. We see, in short, that existence without Christ is an aimless, dreary farce which no worldly pomp or pride or pretence can redeem. We see that all selfish and brutal handling of material things involves the grief of God. The ugliness of the works of mammon is now known as poison to the soul.

Protestants, of course, do not necessarily deny the sacramental meaning of life ; but the point is that their fundamental conceptions do not explicitly set it forth. They have retained the particular sacramental forms, but failing to supply them with strong significance, they have been in great danger. It is useless to adduce the Quakers in this argument. The Quakers accept the sacramental view of the universe, but do not make use of particular sacraments, or at least of the traditional ones. They are not in the same danger as those who profess particular sacraments while shrinking from their full application. But Catholicism seems to place its sacramental philosophy in a sounder psychological setting than that of the Quakers. It would seem natural to sacramental belief that it should concern itself with special times and places, special acts, and even with special garments. This powerful focusing of universal truth appears to be of normal psychological necessity. Men did not worship God more earnestly when they left off going to church, nor did they make the other six days more holy when they made Sunday more secular. Sacraments are not only for their own sake. They exist in order

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that the dogma of Incarnation may be carried to its complete issue and illustration in the ordinary life of this world, in the sanctifying of labour and in the organic union of men, not upon any racial or economic ground, but within the fellowship of the mystery.

Catholicism has doubtless suffered wild perversion at the hands of some of its most ardent missionaries. Its name has been used to cover the denial of its most sacred teachings. But we are concerned here with fundamental conceptions : and because Catholicism is essentially, consistently and soundly sacramental, it seems to provide the ethico-social basis for lack of which the world is falling into confusion. It does seem to proclaim fundamental human equality and solidarity established upon the Rock of Ages. It does appear to publish salvation as essentially social. And there is this to be said : that while Protestantism has exhibited signs of parleying with naturalism without ever showing an adequate psychological understanding of the natural man, Catholicism has never for a single moment been false to its own supernatural basis and yet has come intimately near to human nature. It does seem to have been loyal to true deity and real humanity.

The fact of its intimacy with human nature, indeed, is a constant grievance with Protestants. It is strange that the moment Roman Catholicism is mentioned in some quarters, there instantly arises a storm of accusation and denunciation in the course of which one hears the words Loretto and liquefaction frequently repeated. We are not concerned

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to defend superstition. But even Protestantism has sometimes to deal gently with human limitations. In the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and nineteen, gentlemen were writing wrathfully to the newspapers because a dean of the Church of England had stated that he did not believe the story of Noah and the ark. It is quite a defensible proposition that belief in Noah's ark requires a more cosmic credulity than any miracle of the Church. But these objections are mere trifling. In the great Catholic affirmations such as the integral place of priesthood and the value of sacraments and symbols, we have no mere accident of credulity but a profound understanding of the permanent needs of the human heart.

What is required is not the bald assertion that existing Catholicism is now completely vindicated as against Protestant and evangelical standards. Such a statement would be literally untrue and completely hopeless. But we do need to see the Protestant religious witness rescued both from the distorted loyalties of Erastianism and from the somewhat anarchical conditions which exist amongst the Free Churches, and replaced upon the foundation of an adequate dogma of the Church: upon that conception of the corporate nature of the Christian life which the very word "Catholic" implies and which has been set forth by historic Catholicism in various tried and tested expressions. We do need to behold Catholicism taking up again worthy elements unfortunately and unnecessarily expelled, and utilizing them for the fuller explication of its own principles; for the wealth of a social complex is not unrelated to the richness and depth of the personal values

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which it includes. And Protestantism, specially in the Free Churches, has certainly emphasized personal value. Its trouble is that having emphasized it, it leaves it in the void.

If this combination of principles is proved finally impossible; if Catholicism is to be regarded as essentially impersonal and mechanical, and if personal religion is devoid of any native and unique social bonds, it will be disastrous for the Christian Faith. Only in the unrelated provincialism of the world's life has it been possible for two great rival interpretations to continue without involving the collapse of all Churches; and with the modern shrinking of time and space and the consequent closer and more insistent rivalry of ideas as men are brought into closer contact, there must be a re-incorporation of Protestant values within the regulative Catholic system, if the Christian Faith is to be delivered from the charge that it cannot establish its own intelligibility.

There are, indeed, many grave questions to be asked of Catholicism as it exists to-day: questions arising not from any sectarian standpoint, but from a deep and pure loyalty to religion, to humanity, and to Catholicism itself. Can Rome speak convincingly to the modern intelligence? Can either Rome or the East claim the loyalty of the flaming democratic soul of the world? Can the Anglican Church find healing for the world's wounds, until she completely breaks her official connection with one secular state and dissipates all suspicion of her reliance upon social caste and privilege? In spite of its social and sacramental message, is it possible that Catholicism will ever again live gloriously until

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it is delivered from its present rigid shackles ? Will it ever again become the only mother of strong men ? There are many such questions which must be asked, and it may be long before they are answered ; but we who are Free Catholics find that Catholicism is a life which does not depend upon the monarchical papacy or upon any mechanical conception of communion, and we are convinced that it is destined to provide the fold in which all wandering sheep shall find the Shepherd's side.

We are sometimes told that we are attempting to revive outworn fashions and we are regarded as perpetrating an anachronism. The accusations leave us unmoved. We know that at least we have made a sincere attempt to face the fact that although Catholicism is crippled, Protestantism is dying with the social forms with which it has been identified ; and that with the best possible intention it seems incapable of uttering the living word of power. The world which produced it is passing away before our eyes. We have seen, too, that newly energizing religious forces are expressing themselves in the Catholic sense. There seems to be no alternative between a renewed Catholicism and religious paralysis. The day in which we pass through the world is fraught with possibilities of poignant tragedy ; but we believe there are also possibilities of wonderful achievement. There are signs in the sky, and we must be faithful and courageous. We are not faddists or fanatics, but humble followers of the Lord Jesus, who desire only that He shall capture all the kingdoms of this world. We are not hypnotized by antiquarian interests. We hunger and thirst for

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righteousness in the earth. We are not *poseurs* enjoying an attitude. We desire to see the broken battalions of men rallied to the cause of humanity. We have passed through deep glooms and our hearts have sometimes turned to water; but the name of the Holy Catholic Church has chimed "like music in our ears" and we have found new strength. We have seen her in our dreams radiant and beautiful and terrible as an army with banners. We trust her as the saviour of society.

II

MR. G. K. CHESTERTON AND THE RETURN TO SANITY

THE nineteenth century came to a sad end in the fever of the South African War. Concerning that adventure there have been many and diverse opinions, and England has been praised and blamed for the part she is supposed to have played ; but probably the whole episode does not belong particularly or chiefly to the history either of the British or the Boers. It was an escapade of the Ishmaelites. It was the first unmistakable sign that the modern collapse of religion had already produced alarming social results and that the defeat of the Kingdom of God meant that the human race was about to endure a strict and severe bondage in the Kingdom of Mammon. The South African War was a small but vivid signal of the religious and social catastrophe toward which Europe had long been moving and whose more complete symbols we have seen in the corpses of seven millions of the sons of God and the hundred-guinea coats of the munition workers.

The South African War was even less a national affair than the European War. It was a cosmopolitan adventure in which the soul of England

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was deliberately dragged through the dirt : it revealed the growing power of all those influences which Christian men had counted devilish, for the Power that made it was Money. And the British people who had produced saints and poets, defied popes and sent kings to death or to exile, now became the debauched and stupefied slaves of nameless, homeless financiers. The cheering was led by Anglican bishops and Free Church leaders who had not the slightest notion of what was happening. Had they observed that they were cheering the Death of Christ, they would at least have gone home to change their collars.

We mention the incident of the South African War because it was the natural and appropriate outcome of the eighteen-nineties, and because at this point Mr. G. K. Chesterton may be said to make his appearance upon the public stage. He has told us how, outside the Queen's Hall, he punched the head of an imperialist. This was no ordinary scuffle. The protagonists were representing the conflict of vast and cosmic forces as truly as were St. George and the dragon ; and it must be said in Mr. Chesterton's high honour that for twenty years he has followed that imperialist, waylaying him as he appeared in his various incarnations, and punching his head with methodical precision. For that imperialist is also the yellow press and the plutocracy and scientific agnosticism and several new religions and many other evil things. The jingo imperialism of the close of the nineteenth century was a great public and political sign that Christ was once again despised and rejected. At that time was

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adduced the first clear evidence that the majority of the English had come to believe that He was finally dead and buried.

Now, it is not very surprising that when the public first began to notice Mr. Chesterton, he appeared to be standing upon his head. They thought he was doing it to gain their applause and half-pence, and they paused to look, because his did not seem exactly the figure of an acrobat. But as time passed on, they found that the performance never came to an end. They never saw the performer get up and walk away; and it gradually dawned upon them that he quite seriously believed himself to be standing upon his feet. Some of them began to have the queer sensation of being themselves upside-down. In other words, it was bruited abroad that a great critic of life was amongst men, one who with complete fearlessness would say exactly what he thought about the modern idols. In his adventures amongst the idolatries of this age, Mr. Chesterton behaved as the Spanish Catholics behaved amongst the Aztecs. They thought the idols were idols and they knocked them down, while the people looked on in terror, wondering what horrible fate would fall upon the impious ones. Thus Mr. Chesterton mocked at the silly superstitions of science, the abominable cruelty of the humanitarians, the credulity of the sceptics and the sickly sentimentalism of the rationalists; he knocked down idols, and when the fresh paint came off people could see the ugly features of old enemies.

This is a parabolic and picturesque account of something which has actually happened. Gilbert

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Keith Chesterton has been the foremost representative in this country of that revolt against irreligious intellectualism which has lately appeared in various European countries and has consistently tended to seek its full expression in Catholicism. He is the champion of the Catholic Church, arriving when it seemed to outsiders that all the clever people had deserted her cause (or had returned to it only as cripples); and his influence has probably been wider and deeper than has yet been anywhere acknowledged. His sheer cleverness, his abnormal agility of mind, his verbal power, his shining gift of paradox, together with his impregnable *bonhomie*, at first attracted attention while men had no notion of the real significance of what they were beholding. They had seen literary men doing tricks during the past decade, and they seemed to think they had now discovered the latest of these intellectual buffoons and perhaps the dregs and limit of our literary decadence. It was an amazing revelation of the woodenness of some heads that after Chesterton had been writing for years, one might hear from time to time in a drawing-room the tired opinion that he was not really funny. The comparison was probably with Dan Leno. It took even the world of serious judgement some time to discern exactly what had come to pass—that the English mind had won home: that the cleverest and wildest of all the mad young men of those days had stormed the battlements of heaven and had captured by violence the Kingdom of God; that looking beyond the most startling discoveries of Beardsley and Wilde, spurning the little follies of *The Green Carnation*, searching

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or finality in the fantastic, he had won to some impossible horizon and there had picked up the Apostles' Creed.

It cannot be an odd pose or a new trick shown off for the sake of notoriety, though such a trick might have fascinated any clever and insincere man to whom it had happened to occur. At any rate, it occurred to nobody at the close of the decadence to think that orthodoxy might prove an interesting and profitable attitude. There is but the faintest positive tie between Chesterton and the decadents of the nineties, and it is to be discovered only in his poorest moments: it is an occasional mere trickiness of word-play which begins to degenerate into dulness; but it never lasts long. No decadent ever poured out a roaring sea of books, a rising flood of paradoxical wisdom, an unbroken stream of literary labour enduring for twenty years. He is of the brotherhood of the giants. He might speak with Chaucer and Rabelais. He has the vital creative genius, and it is impossible to think of him ever having said his last word.

The soul of Catholicism is in him, and since the true praise of God is endless, there is no last word. Nor does his humour seem to flag. His style has caused some to consider him a dealer in obscure and tiresome jests, but those unfortunate people are to be pitied. He has used the swift modern paradox, but never in the service of modern scepticism or cynicism. He has used it as a two-handed sword against the modern sin. If he were asked what he had been trying to do throughout these years, there is no doubt that he would reply that he had been

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fighting a certain monstrous and absurd lie which threatened to engulf the world. There are some who say that he has been fighting with shadows : we have noticed these people and we observe that they are already engulfed. We are not, however, concerned to defend his specific proposals for social reconstruction. We do not regard him as possessing the gift of practical statesmanship ; but he has the great vision of direction and spiritual goal, and he has recorded his vision in so arresting a fashion that no student of present-day England can neglect him.

A considerable number of men came to regard Chesterton as purely reactionary and obscurantist. He said nasty things about science and progress. He exhibited no signs of glee in having escaped from the trammels of tradition : in fact, he refused to escape. And he seemed in violent opposition to some things which lovers of freedom believed to belong essentially to their cause. He had, for example, a standing quarrel with doctrinaire Socialism. The uniformed inspectors of the poor, the rich philanthropists who wanted to improve the poor, he certainly loathed. He scoffed at the good intentions of those who proposed to teach children to play. He spoke with a strange enthusiasm for the life of other centuries. But gradually his fundamental criticism of the modern attitude emerged and his various judgements were seen to spring logically and justly from his central positive assertion. This was that mankind had come to a moment of great danger, that a huge and silent menace was hanging over the whole of life, because upon the main modern postulate there was no longer any firm reliance to be placed in the

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cosmic significance of the human race. Philosophy, which had placed diadems upon the human brow, was now suggesting that there was perhaps little ultimate difference between the meaning of men and the meaning of insects. It was a vast universe, and we could not be sure as to our standing and importance in it.

Chesterton fastened upon this as a terrible danger to the soul and to society. He pointed out by a hundred devices that its consequence necessarily was that all traditional philosophy, politics, law and commerce, all civilized manners and customs, were dealing in an obsolete currency: they assumed that a man was a man. The word carried still some echoes of great dignity, but they were becoming fainter. And if the truth was that nobody could know whether a man was still a man, it was no happy discovery: it was a blighting and blasting catastrophe for the race. The facile optimism of the rebels was entirely misplaced. They had thought to make a bonfire of some old rubbish: they found that inextricably mixed with the rubbish were art and history and young love. If there were in human personality no intrinsic value which would be recognized and prized in the supreme court of the universe, then no man could say whether there was any value at all. Unless God is ready to kiss a returning prodigal, we do not know whether it is worth while wearing boots. We do not know what we are doing or where we are going. The universe begins to appear inhuman and mankind a pathetic but hopeless problem.

Now, if life is no longer controlled by the dogma

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of human sanctity, what is to be the dominant authority, and what the motive of existence? The discoveries and improvements of science are quickly found to be meaningless—a whole litter of white elephants. Progress is less than a myth: for nobody has any idea of the true goal of life and we are all equally ignorant of the direction we are taking. Nobody knows whether men are going to grow wings or tails. Nobody knows anything worth knowing. Mankind was now bound to suffer all the practical consequences of the philosophical betrayal. There is now no answer to the worst and vilest suggestion. We may continue to poison people in English slums or hack them to pieces in the Congo plantations; and to say that this is a defiance of all social sanction is not even correct, while to say that it is defiance of the highest social sanction is useless. For no social sanction means anything for certain beyond the little limits of the human tribe. When you get a doctrine of progress coupled with agnosticism, you are in terrible danger. For progress may then mean movement toward any cruel hell in which the strong may make the weak carry their burdens for them. And it has been a great and honourable part of Chesterton's work to remind the world that when man ceases to believe himself a Son of God, he rapidly degenerates into a bondslave of the devil.

He has been thought narrow, prejudiced, obscurantist for his attacks upon much that is sincerely intended as amelioration; while he has loudly praised beer. A careful study will prove that he has withstood proposals which professed to be for

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the welfare of the common people, only when he has felt in them that creeping, inhuman coldness, that ghastly horror of unfaith, which is the glory of the expert and the curse of every one else. He has praised beer ; but he has never spoken in favour of modern brewers. And, after all, beer is a warmer and more tender symbol of fellowship than lemonade. Teetotallers who love their fellow men ought to forgive him the beer, though they may justly wish for a less dangerous sign of brotherhood.

Mr. Chesterton found evidence that paralysis was stealing upon life, in the modern failure to appreciate the simple and ordinary gifts and glories of existence which are new every morning. In an age when the "simple life" had become a conceit of highly artificial people who largely failed to be either simple or alive, it was necessary to assure men that grass is green. Poets and essayists had been doing this, ever since Burns and Wordsworth, but they did not seriously disturb the secret Philistine belief that it was the poets and essayists who were green. Chesterton, however, is not precisely repeating their message. He is asserting that the greenness of grass is miraculous and divine, an incredible thing ; and that prophets might be stoned for daring to declare it. What he means is that if we forget the astounding miracle of common things, we are lost—and he saw that the average modern man had forgotten and was indeed lost.

This is not to be confused with the worship of God in nature or any such inadequate religion : nor is it the praise of fields and hedgerows as better than streets and shops. Chesterton will walk in

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Fleet Street with the immortal shade of Dr. Johnson. He loves the town ; but his quarrel with the modern man is that the latter does not love the town—never sees the town—never realizes, walking upon a street, that he is walking upon a pathway across a star : that every house is a castle in the air : that every window is a magic casement. He saw that the world was yearning after many inventions, but had not the heart to honour the last and wildest wonder because it had impiously grown accustomed to the first and ancient wonders. If men had forgotten to thank God for the old things, they would necessarily find nothing but blight and boredom in the new things ; and consequently all the whirling fashions become a depressing and disgusting monotony. All the sensationalism of the time was as dull as hell because men were missing the huge thrills that God provides every day. Unless the birth of every baby is breathless news, there is nothing particularly important or exciting in a railway accident or a great war. Life cannot be thrilling and glorious if it is built upon mean and commonplace foundations ; but the sense of life itself as essentially amazing and miraculous, was not vigorously alive in our industrial civilization.

This, of course, is only another way of saying that the supernatural significance of life had faded. When Chesterton is derided for speaking much of fairies and devils, only the extremely dull will attach much value to the criticism ; for upon all his work there is written the plain message that unless the supernatural vision is restored an oppressive melancholy, an insufferable, stifling debility will descend

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upon the spirit of man, bringing him to despair and death. This gospel is not an antiquarian fad. It springs from observation of the simple fact that it is only the other world that can possibly relieve our situation in this world ; for if we are shut up to this world we are left without any source or standard of values : we do not know what anything is worth. The attempt to do without religious dogma by showing that morality has its value in preserving the social order breaks down at once, because nobody knows whether any social order is worth preserving. Before we can be sure of that, we must believe that in heaven the angels of the little children do always behold the face of the Father. Before we can seriously seek to deliver society from its enemies, we must see those enemies as emissaries of Satan and heretics against the cosmic Church of God. If we have forgotten that lamp-posts are the lamps of fairyland, we shall hang no more tyrants upon them—not because we have learned the more excellent way of love, but because we have forgotten God. If we fail to notice that every street leads from earth to heaven, we shall erect no more barricades against the proud and godless ones. If this spinning earth is not the footstool of God it is the football of fate. Unless its central meaning is expressed in an altar it must be looked for in a mortuary. The criticism of modern life as being in danger of sacrificing the sense of primal values was made with great power in *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* and again in *Heretics*, as well as in many essays to be found in other volumes.

An even more insistent emphasis, however, is laid

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upon the assertion that in the modern bewilderment concerning the meaning and value of human life, liberty has been disappearing and the chartered privileges of the common folk stolen away. It may be remarked here, in proof of the soundness of Chesterton's judgement, that he was one of the first to realize the degradation and paralysis of parliamentary government in England. He saw that as soon as it became certain that the people were about to capture (or rather re-capture) the House of Commons, the rich would bend all their efforts towards making the House of Commons ridiculous : and they have come near to a disastrous success. But in smaller ways, and in seemingly trifling episodes, he discovered the prevailing sense of helplessness against the new tyrannies which were arising upon every hand. The lawless rich rode across the eternal rights of the people : and the Government of the country had no direct and crushing reply. It was unlikely that the Government would have any such reply ; for the Government were the lawless rich.

Of course, one immediate and disastrous effect of the spiritual failure was the great growth of the power of money—the overwhelming influence allowed to the rich man, by which his personal existence became a social nuisance and the tainted source of moral and political decadence :

It is a sign of sharp sickness in a society when it is actually led by some special sort of lunatic. . . . Whenever the unhealthy man has been on top, he has left a horrible savour that humanity finds still in its nostrils. Now in our time the unhealthy man is on top ; but he is not the man mad on sex, like Nero ; or mad on statecraft, like Louis XI ; he

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is simply the man mad on money. Our tyrant is not the satyr or the torturer; but the miser.¹

Chesterton had seen the evil vision of the world beneath the heels of a few irresponsible and possibly crack-brained millionaires; not, as Marx thought, because this was a necessary stage in the beautiful and blessed process of social evolution; but because men had forgotten their birthright, had disgraced their name and were on the road to the pit. It was a vision possible only because men were failing in faith and losing the unearthly secret of life. One sign of this was that they were disposed to submit to the last indignity of having that mystical adventure known as history explained as the predetermined result of economic necessity. Nowhere perhaps has the materialistic school of history been assailed with such riotous scorn as in the writings of Chesterton; and perhaps he never put the case so succinctly as in the essay entitled *The Sun Worshipper*:

It is putting it too feebly to say that the history of man is not only economic. Man would not have any history if he were only economic. . . . Cows have an economic motive, and apparently (I dare not say what ethereal delicacies may be in a cow) only an economic motive. . . . In short, the cow does fulfil the materialist theory of history: that is why the cow has no history. But if some cows thought it wicked to eat long grass and persecuted all who did so; if the cow with the crumpled horn were worshipped by some cows and gored to death by others; if cows began to have obvious moral preferences over and above a desire for grass, then cows would begin to have a history. They would also begin to have a highly unpleasant time, which is perhaps the same thing.²

¹ *A Miscellany of Men*, pp. 138-139.

² *Idem*, p. 61.

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It is impossible to appreciate Chesterton unless one sees that he is always fighting for the spiritual and sacramental interpretation of human life. The noble curses which he piles in heaps upon the boasted scientific and industrial developments of the time spring not from any muddle-headedness, nor from any desire to be singular, but from the perception that in those developments there was no discernible desire to declare the intrinsic and terrible value of a man. He cries aloud, in passages of argument tortured by a pained sincerity, in bursts of high and splendid rhetoric, in clashing paradoxes which are the signs of a deep moral and intellectual agony. If any one fails to understand, because this writer has a way of making jokes out of the last solemnities, he is surely blind. Chesterton is serious, in all conscience. He saw that the modern man was gaining the whole world and losing his own soul: he knew the day was coming when soul and body would be cast into hell and that the strong pride and arrogance of the scientific age would turn to a sickening whine.

Meanwhile he proceeded to record the evidences. He carefully noticed the strange silence which had fallen upon the world. Beyond the roar of its traffic and machinery there was a lack of brave speech, a failure in public discussion. Men were finding themselves in the hands of the official and the expert, or under the feet of the wealthy, and they seemed as helpless as a rabbit fascinated by a snake. "Two hundred years ago," he observed, "we turned out the Stuarts rather than endanger the Habeas Corpus Act. Quite recently we abolished the Habeas Corpus

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Act rather than turn out the Home Secretary." ¹ Life was becoming a vast mechanism into which men were fitted and by which they were irrevocably controlled. And the hands which controlled the machine were the hands of the rich. Chesterton's huge and unwavering hatred of experts and specialists arises from his belief that they are the most efficient instruments of this benumbing tyranny beneath which the dear human decencies and the sacred liberties of the common people must fall. The expert, in Chesterton's view, is the product of the notion that there are things of greater importance than, say, the soul of a little Cockney costermonger ; and that is a blasphemous and heretical lie. But because it is a common and powerful lie, the modern English have lost the reality of self-government. They do not settle the questions about which they shall vote at elections : they do not choose the men who shall represent them in Parliament. And once the moment of election is over, even the pretence of popular government withers. " The thing we have is the real and perhaps rare political phenomenon of an occult Government." ²

Chesterton was convinced that Mr. Belloc's theory of the servile state was being increasingly demonstrated. The people of England at the beginning of the twentieth century were in danger of completely losing England—for manhood had ceased to be the most precious and powerful thing in England. The dogmas of essential human sanctity and inalienable human right were defeated and defunct :

¹ *A Miscellany of Men*, p. 80.

² See the essay, *Political Secrecy*, in *All Things Considered*.

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and in the great inhuman universe, with the doctrine of the humanity of God a forgotten fable, man himself becomes inhuman. Strange and sinister tyrannies lift their heads and the kindly laughter of simple hearts grows fainter. The wheels roar more loudly : and amongst them wanders a man, as significant and as sacred as a lost fly.

A further result of the basic doubt about humanity is discovered in the littleness, the fussiness and the ineffectiveness of the modern crusades. There can be no great battle for and against any ideas when nobody takes sides upon the question of whether a man is a clever clod or a divine prodigal. Unless men have some hard dogmas about human existence, they are sure to become sentimental and ridiculous in their championship of causes. The ordinary machine-made rivalry of political parties is, of course, beneath contempt ; but even some sincere attempts to secure strongly desired ends suffer in the modern world because they are opposed, not by fierce scorn and militant anger, but by polite yawns. Thus in an essay upon modern martyrs, Chesterton points out that the exhibitions of the Passive Resisters and the Suffragists could not possibly have the effect of making converts. The real martyrs had really suffered, not silly discomforts, but foul and frightful tortures ; and their sufferings proved that in those days people took each other's opinions quite seriously. The suffering did not prove that either party was right : but it proved that both parties were in desperate earnest. But in the world of to-day it is practically impossible for a witness of that sort to be given upon any subject

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under heaven ; for only by a rare and strange coincidence could you find, in the present condition of society, one man willing to die for his faith and another man ready to kill him for it. Conviction is not a modern characteristic ; and you cannot go to the stake if there are no stakes. You cannot fight the modern mind, for it lacks the virility necessary to belief. It will not hit back. To attack it is like fencing with water or thrashing a feather-bed.

The world of our times had permitted a doubt upon the foremost and final question : and if you think it does not matter if a man says that his personality is a momentary covolution of the ether, it is folly to bother about any other opinion he may express. This may seem an artificial criticism, a finely-spun objection, to the modern mentality, but a little reflection reveals its enormous importance. Mr. Chesterton utters it with no fond longings for the return of Torquemada ; but he does see that if there is to be no passionate and overwhelming conviction in politics and sociology, the cold-blooded theories and the inhuman experiments will certainly appear. If men doubt that they are sons of God, there will soon arise some movement which will assume that they are cattle. And if we are to revive belief in the realms of political and social theory, we must first recall dogma in the realm of religion. Before we can receive power from on high, we must know who and what we are in the sight of Omnipotence.

Chesterton surveyed the life of the period and came to the conclusion that the world was losing power and directivity. He saw a vast welter of

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confusion displaying itself in every outward sign that is specially modern. He made the discovery that the world, at least the irreligious industrial world, had forgotten the value of symbols—a clear indication of the departure of the sense of high purpose in life. When men are sure of purpose, when they have kept the sacramental sense, symbols ordinarily spring up from everything they touch. They will have great crucifixes in their churches and emblazoned signs upon their breasts. But when the sense of purpose has departed they will say with tired, thin voices that they do not like formalism : and they will consent to live in a suburban villa called “ The Pines,” where there is nothing like a pine but only three marigolds to be seen.

But this deficiency of sacramental sense is really more serious. How can there be any architecture, any art, in a mere respectable agnostic world ? What signs can we show forth, when we have not the remotest conception of what we would signalize ? What shall be the shape of our law and our policy, if we have no conception of the end and aim of the life of man ? These questions Chesterton thrust with high seriousness and joyful energy into the face of the world. They were haunting, awkward questions such as Socrates might have asked, could he have walked this earth in our time. If they are not fairly faced, some things are certain. The dignity and honour of man are lost ideals. The splendour of the soul is a bedraggled garment. The human race is found straying with no abode and no visible means of support ; and the strong devils will come and lock it up in some regimented tyranny wherein

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democracy and decency alike will perish for ever. Beauty will lose its spirit and die into vulgarity. Justice will become a jest. Chesterton announced that these things were beginning to happen.

Much of his work consists of such criticism, and although he was at first underestimated and his attacks were resented as mere obscurantism, there can be no doubt that his influence has steadily increased. Somewhere about the year 1905, when the New Theology was explaining to the man in the street how little it was necessary to believe, appeared the volume called *Heretics*, which not only pilloried some popular prophets as heretics but showed the intrinsic need for a positive orthodoxy, an accepted body of divinity. Whatever has happened to the New Theology, it is now quite certain that most of its intelligent adherents have been converted to Mr. Chesterton's thesis. And as he develops it in the final chapter of the volume, it seems incontrovertible.

He does not categorically deny that the human mind itself may advance; but he is certain that the modern conception of mental progress is entirely impossible. Intellectual advance has been supposed by modern men to involve a shedding of definite belief—an escape from dogma, an attitude of opposition to the very notion of a creed. But this, says Chesterton, is stark nonsense :

The human brain is a machine for coming to conclusions ; if it cannot come to conclusions it is rusty. When we hear of a man too clever to believe, we are hearing of something having almost the character of a contradiction in terms. It is like hearing of a nail that was too good to hold down

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a carpet ; or a bolt that was too strong to keep a door shut. . . . Man can be defined as an animal that makes dogmas. . . . When he drops one doctrine after another in a refined scepticism, when he declines to tie himself to a system, when he says that he has outgrown definitions, when he says that he disbelieves in finality, when, in his own imagination, he sits as God, holding no form of creed but contemplating all, then he is by that very process sinking slowly backwards into the vagueness of the vagrant animals and the unconsciousness of the grass.¹

The world has become a tremendous tangle because it has no dogma. That is the secret of the modern failure—a failure so huge and heavy that all the invention of science seem beside it only childishly irrelevant : and that is the summary of the first part of Chesterton's message. It is often made an occasion for superior airs that Chesterton is mad on something called mediævalism. This indeed is so widely asserted that it is necessary to make the calm and assured remark that if any such thing as mediævalism ever existed, Chesterton would be its most determined foe. But he does happen to know something about the Middle Ages. He has never for a moment exhibited any mawkish sentiment upon the subject ; but he has seen the truth that in the Middle Ages life had a certain coherence and cohesion which it now lacks. He very sensibly finds the cause in the facts that people in the Middle Ages at least believed they knew what life was all about ; and that people to-day have no clear conviction upon the subject. Even if the mediæval dogma was wrong, it was a spiritual implement whereby a certain shape was imposed upon customs and upon

¹ *Heretics*, pp. 285, 286.

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costumes, upon laws and upon letters, upon statesmanship and even upon stones. There is no such controlling mental concept in the modern world: there is but the formless agnosticism and fickle uncertainty by which our cities, our clothes, and even our churches gradually lose all distinctiveness of meaning, and life begins to resolve into chaos. From the Middle Ages we have passed to the Muddle Ages.

If the decay of civilization is to be arrested, there must be a restoration of positive and governing conviction concerning the holy and honourable meaning of life. There must be dogma.¹ Any one who has read newspapers and mingled with men during the past quarter of a century knows that the foolish fear of conviction has fallen like a devastation upon the mind. To be sure about fundamental things is to betray oneself, to modern eyes, as a greenhorn. As it is put in *Heretics*:

General theories are everywhere contemned; the doctrine of the Rights of Man is dismissed with the doctrine of the Fall of Man. Atheism itself is too theological for us to-day. Revolution itself is too much of a system: liberty itself is too much of a restraint. We will have no generalizations. Mr. Bernard Shaw has put the view in a perfect epigram: "The golden rule is that there is no golden rule." We are more and more to discuss details in art, politics, literature. A man's opinion on tramcars matters; his opinion on Botticelli matters; his opinion on all things does not matter. He may turn over and explore a million objects, but he must

¹ Mr. Chesterton has not defined the exact scope of the word "dogma." We are content to use it in the sense of dominating conviction spontaneously expressed.

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not find that strange object, the universe; for if he does he will have a religion, and be lost. Everything matters—except everything.¹

And if the question be asked: Is this shrinking from contact with the ultimate likely to produce strong manhood and splendid poems? there can only be one answer. It is likely to produce a myopic and fundamentally frivolous generation, in grave peril of the abyss. Chesterton believed this. But when the abyss yawned and mankind tumbled in, he did not seem to notice what had happened. We pass this criticism deliberately, feeling that although it is serious, it is not disparagement of his genius and greatness. He who had assailed modern England with sublime courage and penetrating scorn, told us that he made peace with modern England when she went to war with Germany. He did not pause to consider that the financiers and their sycophant journalists were all going to war with Germany. He did not foresee that when the armistice was signed the people of England would be under a closer surveillance and a more certain tyranny than at any time since King John signed Magna Carta. But if he made peace with England in 1914 he did not long keep it. Moreover, there is this to be said, that the sight of the soiled and sodden poor of England rising up to do something definite and dangerous was no mean spectacle. It did seem, for a brief moment, as if England were ready to make her peace with God. It did appear that England had found something in which to believe. This naturally must appeal to Chesterton: but we now

¹ *Heretics*, p. 13.

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know that the creed of England in 1919 was not that dogma which he believed to be the great necessity. He had been challenged, after *Heretics* had appeared, to say what was his own belief. He accepted the challenge and wrote *Orthodoxy*.

That fascinating account of Mr. Chesterton's own religious and theological adventures is also a defence of the Christian Faith as the basis of permanent sanity and as providing the true unification of the clashing discords of the heart. He declares that he arrived at the Christian dogma by way of reaction upon the modern rationalism offered to him as the last word of wisdom. He discovered that the bold and beautiful cosmos of the rationalist's vision soon turned into a lunatic's cell: that the vast universe of the modern materialist is a poor, pinchbeck affair. He found that the Christian Faith did make the world look a little more reasonable than rationalism made it. He noticed that whether the insulated reason leads a man to materialism or solipsism, to a hard and iron objectivity or to an equally unbending subjectivity, it has led him in either case into a very small hole. The two extremities of scepticism are both subversive of all values.

The man who cannot believe his senses, and the man who cannot believe anything else, are both insane, but their insanity is proved not by any error in their argument, but by the manifest mistake of their whole lives. They have both locked themselves up in two boxes, painted inside with the sun and stars; they are both unable to get out, the one into the health and happiness of heaven, the other even into the health and happiness of the earth.¹

¹ *Orthodoxy*, p. 45.

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But an escape becomes imperatively necessary. Living and conscious men and women cannot achieve heroic deeds, or even daily decency, if the value of human life is less than infinite. In fact, men find that decency is possible only when life is conceived as heroic. Without faith, men die of moral consumption, and the proof is found in the collapse of empire after empire, the decay of culture after culture. The sheer instinct for self-preservation must at length cause men to turn and curse all rationalists out of their presence, for life must be saved from idiocy: and the rationalistic interpretations of life all succeed in making it an exasperating futility. To this large practical test the high-sounding philosophies of scepticism must be brought. The advent of Nietzsche, John Davidson and Bernard Shaw was a sign that once again logic was found out. It was not big enough to be the dictator of life.

Nevertheless the modern reaction against rationalism has taken a form equally futile, the adoration of the will. But just as the worship of pure reason turns the world into a madhouse, so the worship of the will turns it into a home for incurables. It paralyses the will. The praise of pure choice is absurd, because if choice in itself is abstractly valuable there is no reason whatever why it should ever occur; for if it is choice alone and not the end chosen which matters, nothing ever will be chosen. And so Chesterton imagines Nietzsche turning up at last in Thibet, and sitting down with Tolstoy "in the land of nothing and Nirvana":

They are both helpless—one because he must not grasp anything, and the other because he must not let go of any-

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thing. The Tolstoyan's will is frozen by a Buddhist instinct that all special actions are evil. But the Neitzscheite's will is quite equally frozen by his view that all special actions are good; for if all special actions are good, none of them are special. They stand at the cross-roads, and one hates all the roads and the other likes all the roads. The result is—well, some things are not hard to calculate. They stand at the cross-roads.¹

Some better gospel must be found if faith in the divine purpose of our existence is to be preserved; and Chesterton opens his defence of Christian dogma at this point by contrasting modern scientific philosophy with the fairy tales, greatly to the disadvantage of the former. The first object is to show that Christian dogma does allow a man to perceive that every time he goes to his office, every time he buys a newspaper or eats his lunch, he is taking part in a miracle play. Christian dogma finds a place for wonder; and rightly, for after all, "we cannot say why an egg can turn into a chicken any more than we can say why a bear could turn into a fairy prince."² Some solemn critics have remarked that this is simply Hume's account of causation; but at any rate, it has now been bridled to the service of belief. This elemental wonder at the obvious and ordinary things in the world is a positive religious prompting which clothes the whole structure of existence with a mystic sanctity.

But on the other hand, the fairy tales are full of mysterious conditions and limits upon which alone safety and happiness may be kept. So is life. You revolt against the conditions at your peril: you

¹ *Orthodoxy*, p. 74.

² *Idem*, p. 91.

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utter the forbidden word and you break the happy charm. You cross some boundary and you find that life has become limbo. But in the fairy tales spells do not simply happen; they are woven by some agent, good or evil: and against scientific fatalism Mr. Chesterton now asserted that magic presupposes a magician, and that if magical events take place every morning, that is no proof of the absence of spirit and volition, but is indeed the manifestation of a terrible spiritual vitality. And yet if life is found to be hedged in by strange prohibitions, limited by weird charms, no man may justly complain; for life is an "eccentric legacy," an amazing and improbable privilege which has come our way. Although philosophers object that this is mysticism, they cannot drive away from our minds the thought that even philosophers themselves certainly are amazing and improbable privileges and eccentric legacies which have come our way. This divine *argumentum ad hominem* is the only possible argument in the last resort. For any man, with his logic and his science, might conceivably never have been born: each man and each man's universe are miracles. To say anything less is to talk violent nonsense.

From this starting point Chesterton proceeds with his defence of the Faith. He explains in the ensuing chapters how he found that Christianity, whether it be true or false, certainly invites men to believe in precisely those things which do, as a matter of fact, make life worth living. It tells him that he is a sinner, which means that he is a supernatural being. It tells him that he is a rebel and a traitor,

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which means that he might be God's champion. It assures him that his most sacred duty is loyalty to the creation, faith in the goodness of things and in the purpose of life. Even its apparently harsh dicta are explained by its jealous loyalty to the divine human cause. It has ostracized the suicide in his death, because he had already ostracized God and all created things. The Christian follows the flag of the world. He maintains the fundamental decency and sanity of existence. Upon his wild faith he builds all healthy and normal things.

The Faith, however, seems to stand at the perilous centre of all life : it seems rooted in paradox and yet it appears to reconcile opposites—not by abolishing either or both of them, but by including them. It really does appear to approach human problems with some vast and vital power of synthesis. Thus it has been attacked for being too pessimistic and for being too optimistic : for being too pacific and for being too militant ; for being too limited and particular and exclusive and for being too comprehensive. If this religion is a mistake, it is an extraordinarily bad mistake. It is so bad upon every side that it is a superhuman evil. It must have come from hell. It is unearthly, whether one loves or hates it ; and Jesus of Nazareth must be either Christ or Anti-Christ.

Yet, after all, is it not probable upon the face of things that it is Christianity which is sane and all its conflicting critics mad ? When Chesterton turned and looked a second time at the critics he made some pertinent discoveries. They charged

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Christianity with austerity and also with pomp and ritualistic extravagance; but the very charge turned out to be a condemnation of the modern world. "The modern man thought Beckett's robes too rich and his meals too poor. But then the modern man was really exceptional in history; no man before ever ate such elaborate dinners in such ugly clothes." There was evidently a strong case to be made out for the Faith, from the very nature of the objections raised against it.

But Christianity is much more than merely central and sane. It is always "a combination of two almost insane positions." It is a balance of fierce opposites. It is not a compromise. It is a synthesis—"love and wrath both burning"—its combined elements intensely active and present in their unmitigated significance. And at the very heart of orthodoxy stands the dogma of Christ:

That Christ was not a being apart from God and man, like an elf, nor yet a being half human and half not, like a centaur, but both things at once and both things thoroughly, very man and very God.

Moreover, the preservation of this amazing balance in history has been, to say the least, highly exciting. Always beset by temptations from this side and from that, by a series of hairbreadth escapes the Faith has been preserved. But this is the story of the Church, and if the Faith is supernatural and divine, so also is the Church. For all the enormous failures of the Church are light and little things compared with the fact that she has performed the entirely impossible task of keeping the Faith. But

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upon the subject of the Church more will be said presently.

Chesterton reached the orthodox position, as is easily seen, by the main argument that Christianity is the only possible buttress of the permanent and profound value of the human soul, and the strongest and sanest sanction of human society. He found in it an authority upon which men could safely rest their self-respect; and a freedom in which they could accomplish high adventures. He saw that ordered liberty must be based upon the supernatural and that in Christ the supernatural had invaded the world for the world's salvation. He felt that the universe with Christ crucified in it contained an infinitely richer inwardness than any specimen of universe proposed by rationalists. He discovered that the Christian Faith stirs the pulses and uplifts the sinking spirit. He found it the foster-mother of strong champions and mighty heroes. He found that in its strength a man could accomplish the last, remote miracle, and actually be a man—and to the modern man that came with a sudden shock of surprise.

All this insistence upon the need of dogma is made, not in order to repress and insult the human spirit, but in order to deliver and ennoble it. Chesterton asserted that Christianity with its positive teaching was the real charter of all human liberties and the foundation of faith even in life's elementary decencies. The entrance of God upon the human stage at Bethlehem brings a new glory upon the page of history and even upon the pages of the newspaper. The murder of God at Calvary displays the cosmic

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significance of everything human, even human sin. The Empty Tomb announces that humanity is not only a soiled and broken thing, wandering upon the earth ; but that there is now humanity within the veil, at the right hand of God. And if these things are believed, the figure of every common man is enlarged and there is a new importance in the policeman and the postman.

The same fine lesson is enforced in *The Ballad of the White Horse*. The Alfred legends are woven with consummate skill into the narrative, but the whole heroic story becomes an allegory of the warfare between the Christian Faith which defends and delivers, and the paganism and scepticism which bind and blind, the soul. If we would understand Alfred and his labours, we must first understand the Christian Faith :

Lady, by one light only
We look from Alfred's eyes,
We know he saw athwart the wreck
The sign that hangs about your neck,
Where One more than Melchizedek
Is dead and never dies.

The King goes forth upon his triumphant campaign, not at the bidding of any fatalistic oracle, but at the word of Our Lady, who tells him nothing except that things are growing worse and worse ; but as the meaning of the words flashes upon his mind he sees what is at stake, and knows that this divine agnosticism of freedom is the sublimest reason for fighting at all. By a stroke of sheer genius Alfred's chief followers are represented as being a Saxon, a

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Roman and a Celt ; but the King brings but one message to them :

Out of the mouth of the Mother of God
Like a little word come I ;
For I go gathering Christian men
From sunken paving and ford and fen,
To die in a battle, God knows when,
By God, but I know why.

In the camp of the Danes, the disguised king hears the great pagan earls sing the philosophies of naturalism in their various forms : first Harold, who sings the pagan joy of lust and life and scoffs at the " God of the nails from Rome " ; then Elf, who praises passion and its wistful longing, unassuaged in this world, and tells of tragedy and the breaking of man's heart ; then Ogier, old and disillusioned, who has exhausted all the goods of life and sees the only remaining good in fury and destruction ; and finally Guthrum himself, who with cold calm sings the returning cycles of birth and decay and tells that existence is a wheel for ever revolving, that the unceasing, unresting movement is the only abiding thing : that all love and beauty are as faces in the fire.

The answering song of Alfred is magnificent. It is the Christian Faith chanted in high poetry, carried upon a banner, gloriously defiant :

I will even answer the mighty earl
That asked of Wessex men
Why they be meek and monkish folk,
And bow to the White Lord's broken yoke ;
What sign have we save blood and smoke ?
Here is my answer then.

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That on you is fallen the shadow,
And not upon the Name ;
That though we scatter and though we fly,
And you hang over us like the sky,
You are more tired of victory,
Than we are tired of shame.

That though you hunt the Christian man
Like a hare on the hill-side,
The hare has still more heart to run
Than you have heart to ride.

That though all lances split on you,
All swords be heaved in vain,
We have more lust again to lose
Than you to win again.

The song closes upon that mood of overwhelming conviction of the inherent worth of life which is the blazing glory of the Christian religion. Alfred, tattered, broken and lonely in the midst of scoffing enemies, takes courage to tell them why their doom is assured : it is because the joy of life cannot nourish itself, because neither reason nor romance can find sustenance, apart from faith :

Therefore your end is on you,
Is on you and your kings,
Not for a fire in Ely fen,
Not that your gods are nine or ten,
But because it is only Christian men
Guard even heathen things.

For our God hath blessed creation,
Calling it good. I know
What spirit with whom you blindly band
Hath blessed destruction with his hand ;
Yet by God's death the stars shall stand
And the small apples grow.

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The legend of the burning of the cakes becomes the occasion of some tender passages upon the mystery of the poor. When the woman strikes the king's face, there is fought in Alfred's soul a battle between cruel pride and humble forgiveness, but the torture passes from his eyes and his anger explodes in

The giant laughter of Christian men
That roars through a thousand tales.

But Chesterton makes use of the incident to convey, in a manner at once subtle and sound, the Christian truth that the only thing which is big enough to beat scepticism, to confound the eternal pagan, is the courage which can bear a blow in meekness. It is only by humility that man may scale the high walls of heaven. It is only out of the dust that he rises to the throne of God. To know that one has failed and may fail again, is the only way to supreme victory. To have humbled oneself before the poor and lowly is the best preparation for pulling down the mighty from their seats.

He that hath failed in a little thing
Hath a sign upon the brow ;
And the Earls of the Great Army
Have no such seal to show.

This blow that I return not
Ten times will I return
On kings and earls of all degree,
And armies wide as empires be
Shall slide like landslips to the sea
If the red star burn.

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This great ballad is a symbol of the warfare between the Christian Faith and the wisdom of this world, and although it records a victory of the Faith it teaches that the battle may be many times renewed. Alfred knew that the pagans would one day return, not with warships but with ink ; but he knew that in whatsoever guise they might come, their essential effect would be always definite and disastrous. The enemies of the Cross are the enemies of creation. Those who fight against Christ fight against men. This strong conviction surges up at the end in a lofty denunciation of the philosophies that reduce the significance of human life and bind the soul of man in the iron chains of necessity :

By thought a crawling ruin,
By life a leaping mire,
By a broken heart in the breast of the world,
And the end of the world's desire ;

By God and man dishonoured,
By death and life made vain,
Know ye the old barbarian,
The barbarian come again—

When is great talk of trend and tide,
And wisdom and destiny,
Hail that undying heathen
That is sadder than the sea,

Here, and in some of the shorter poems, Chesterton takes his place as a poet of the Faith. Here, as in *Orthodoxy*, he is definitely proclaiming to the modern world the need of the supernatural as expressed in Christianity. He conceives that nothing else can

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restore self-respect to the human race. Nothing else can provide the desperately needed sense of value in existence ; and consequently human freedom and order, and the health of all our art and literature, depend upon the renewal of faith in Christ. That indeed is a plain and poignant assertion which it is impossible to miss ; and it is the fundamental challenge of Chesterton to the life and thought of his times. He sees no likelihood of honour and beauty returning to men until men return to God. He believes that scepticism and the servile state are closely related, and he preaches the Faith as the true defence of the common people against a final degradation.

This claim for orthodoxy, put forward with subtle and surprising argument and employing laughter as a strong weapon, was not without result. It can be safely asserted that it had some influence in depriving the " modern mind " of its self-important swagger. But, after all, the British Public had been to Sunday School, and although for the most part it had remained quite irreligious since its youth, it had retained in memory some vague and sketchy outlines of Christian theology. Chesterton's position, therefore, so far as it was Christian in the broad sense, was not considered as a complete innovation. For Christianity was a thing that might have various meanings, and at the time was being variously interpreted. Theologians indeed were falling over each other in their eagerness to trim down the Faith to the shape and dimensions required by modern thought. People were thinking of a Christianity which might get on quite nicely without either crucifix or Crucified,

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without miracles, sacraments or dogmas, and would substitute for these obsolete appurtenances some glowing, heart-felt message about comfort and kindness.

But that is precisely the kind of Christianity that Chesterton will not have. He is a Catholic ; but he is not a Catholic because he is tired and broken. He regards Catholicism as the fighting religion. He frankly accepts the Christian Faith as an irruption of the supernatural, and the Church as an institution miraculously created and sustained. He sees indeed that the dogma of Incarnation involves the sacramental Church. " Jesus," he says, " left on earth not only four lives of Himself, but also a Church and a Catholic tradition." ¹

There are, of course, several obvious reasons why Chesterton should find no satisfaction in anything less than Catholicism. To begin with, in all the modern world Catholicism alone struck the note of confident conviction concerning the supernatural. A generation previously, the evangelicals had borne an equally emphatic witness : but there were few consistent evangelicals left in these days, and at all events, evangelicals were deficient in other respects. To Chesterton, a religion which was not dogmatic was worthless. The whole point of his attack upon the modern world lay in this ; and Catholicism more clearly than any other sort of Christianity remaining in the world, does claim direct, divine reality for its dogma. But Chesterton desires also some bond wherewith to tie again the broken fragments of the world into a living unity : he is always

¹ *Hibbert Journal*, July 1909.

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concerned with the problem of modern society. Protestant evangelicalism does not even offer itself as a solution of that problem. It never pretended to save men in organic and corporate connection. Its main message is to the individual heart. It was the offspring of a particular period and perpetrates the extreme reactions of that period. It doubtless is entirely necessary that a man shall look into his own heart and become assured of a personal relation with God, but unless at the same time he is aware of a relation with every one else, unless he sees that the salvation of others is part of his own salvation, and that redemption is an organic solution of an organic problem, he is always in danger of becoming a nuisance and a snob. But if he does see these truths, he wants to feel himself within the Holy Catholic Church. Protestantism, in spite of all its learning and piety, has not succeeded in restoring Christendom as a fact, even amongst Protestant nations. The backbone of Europe, in spite of all that has happened during the past four centuries, is still the Catholic tradition. This is not to condemn Protestantism outright, nor does it necessarily involve the complete approval of any form in which Catholicism is now expressed; but it does mean that if civilization is to be saved, the neglected Catholic tradition must be reasserted and restored to a position of supremacy in the minds and hearts of modern men.

Mr. Chesterton has observed, too, that Christianity is naturally symbolic and sacramental. Because of the plain and solid fact that we are always in contact with material substance, it is necessary for our religion to have its special material expression if its

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supernatural nature is to escape the peril of being smothered. The sordid greed of the industrial era, for example, has expressed itself in a certain debased architecture. If we adopt that debased style for our churches, what exactly are we expressing in building them? We all know how difficult it is to believe, in some places of worship, that one is taking part in a Christian celebration. It seems much more likely that one is symbolically celebrating the torments of the jerry-builder in hell. The Christian symbols are simply the deliberate use of matter to express the special supernatural fact; and because there is so much matter expressing the world, the flesh and the devil, Christianity without its vestments and its ritual may be in danger of forgetting its own identity. The vestments and rites are useless and ludicrous without the Christian will; but that will has seemed to lose its directivity in parting with its registering symbols.

Now, the majority of Protestants seem to have forgotten this. The only logical people amongst them are still the Quakers, who refused not only the Catholic symbols but the Catholic sacraments also. They challenged the laws of normal psychology, and we may say that in one sense they were defeated—for every Quaker meeting found a sacramental grace in silence; and every Quaker became a walking symbol so clearly defined that modern commercialism has considered him most useful as a trade-mark. All the world has heard of Quaker Oats. There may be a good argument and a secure place for non-sacramental religion when it is recognized as abnormal and of

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special vocation ; but for Protestants who perform the solemn acts of eating bread and drinking wine in hushed reverence (even though they consider it no more than a memorial feast), to make much objection to symbol and ritual on principle, does seem not a little absurd. It seems like straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Chesterton, however, reminded the world that when men have a gospel which fills their hearts, they will normally desire to declare it in vestments and material signs, if only in the drums and jerseys of the Salvation Army.

Catholicism is then, for Mr. Chesterton, the normal form of Christianity. And he is one of the outstanding evidences of the movement of return which, having already exerted considerable influence amongst the intellectuals of Italy, France and Belgium, reached this country some years ago when it seemed the most unlikely development which the modern English mind could contemplate. But there are two points to which special reference must be made. The first is that Chesterton has not attempted precisely to define Catholicism in respect of the time-honoured controversy between the churches actively claiming to be Catholic. Upon the Continent, at least in its Western portions, the return to Catholicism has meant renewed allegiance to Rome. In England it may conceivably mean either that, or a renewed loyalty to the Catholic party within the Church of England. And it is very possible that it may mean neither : for in England there are the Free Churches whose ministry has in recent years been enormously, if vaguely, influenced in the Catholic direction, but which will not readily submit to the

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undemocratic system of Rome, with its various evil consequences, or to the Erastianism of the Anglican Church, even in a modified form. If is, of course, easy to assert that these Free Churchmen cannot hope to reach a valid Catholicism upon such terms ; but that is precisely what remains to be proved. The question of what constitutes a valid Catholicism is still awaiting settlement. It is settled in favour of Rome only by Romans : and Anglo-Catholics who are emphatic upon the apostolic succession by a rigid and mechanical method are often dangerously near to revolt against the apostolic guardians of law and order. So far as Mr. Chesterton's writings go, he does not attempt to define the present limits and scope of the Catholic Church : and that is one reason why he so fittingly appears as a leader of the return to sanity in this country. He desiderates the restoration of Catholicism as the prime need of Europe, but he has left the mode of that restoration an open question, whose various answers will be studied in the ensuing chapters.

Nor has he precisely defined the nature of dogma in respect of the Modernist controversy. There are many people who remain outside of Catholicism because of nothing more than one or two intellectual difficulties. Is Catholicism entirely and essentially committed to the assertion that the discursive intellect can provide formularies which are adequate criteria of faith or unfaith ? That also is a question which awaits settlement. The Modernist controversy has not been closed, either by a Papal encyclical or by those Catholics who in consequence thereof went off in dudgeon and joined the straitest sect of Liberal-

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ism. Upon the answers eventually given to these questions depend issues of large importance for the future of Christianity. At present the rival interpretations of the Faith have reached a position of deadlock in which neither appears to have an assured future, and it seems that some synthesis to which they shall all bring constructive elements is rapidly becoming a stern necessity. Mr. Chesterton does not discuss these things ; but he forces us to discuss them. Meanwhile we are thankful for his genius and courage. He was one of the first to assure the modern world that it had not come to stay ; and in a night of adversity, when the Church seemed almost lost, he descried the morning and heard the trumpets of victory.

III

MONSIGNOR R. H. BENSON AND THE CASE FOR ROME

THERE was a short period in the nineteenth century when it seemed possible that the Roman Church was about to win a sensational success, and might even become the chief shield and refuge of religion in this country ; and in weak moments any man who is disgusted with respectability in the Church of England, or with slovenly confusion in the Free Churches, may be tempted to wish that this thing had happened. The Oxford Movement had been almost paralysed by the crossing of Newman and, being under great suspicion, was driven into temporary silence ; while for some years Newman was followed into the Roman communion by a stream of Anglican priests. This left the English Church largely influenced by latitudinarians who had but a dim church-consciousness and only a very vague sense of the issues actually in conflict.

Meanwhile the forces of scientific naturalism were everywhere gaining strength, and their destructive impetus was already shaking the defences of the ordinary moderate churchmanship of the period ; and in such circumstances it was not strange that Rome, with her massive self-assurance and her

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increasingly rigid doctrine of authority, should attract many fretted and fevered spirits. Her chief religious rival at the moment was not the Church of England at all, but the Free Churches; for in those days they also had something definite to offer. Those were times when vicars and curates still might be heard saying spiteful things about nonconformists, and their feelings are not difficult to understand; for a strong pulse of English religion was beating in the Free Churches and they seemed to be laying hold of some of the most virile elements in the national life. The industrial era was now well established and the better-paid workmen and the rising manufacturers went in great numbers to chapel. And if they erected buildings for worship which afterwards made excellent furniture repositories and hardware stores, it cannot be denied that they produced preachers whose names became household words throughout the land and whose eloquence drew great audiences all the year round. What is more important, they kept the figure of Christ before millions of English eyes. But their vigour upon the one hand and the Roman self-assurance on the other made the future of the Church of England very doubtful.

The Free Churches owed their success to two causes. They were in the main strongly evangelical, basing their plea upon individual experience; and they were in reaction against the old aristocracy and squirearchy and the social traditions of Tory England. Nor were these two characteristics entirely unconnected. The older conceptions of corporate life were now held to involve unfair restraints upon

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the masses. Political Liberalism and Radicalism were still in their individualistic phase of development: and while society was being interpreted as the instrument of the individual, it was not unnatural that the individual should assume a somewhat distorted significance in religion. It is true that religion is never real and vital unless it is a matter of individual experience; but it tends to become both fantastic and narrow unless it receives also a corporate embodiment. But in the middle of the nineteenth century, and before the spread of scientific naturalism amongst the more thoughtful sections of the people, the Free Churches were making rapid progress. Their emphasis upon religious experience gave them, indeed, some foothold against the assaults of naturalism, at least temporarily, and thus offered an alternative to the hard, external authority of Rome which was soon to be fixed in the formula of infallibility; while their "freedom," and perhaps a certain stiff and self-sufficient philistinism mis-called "stalwartness," could not but be attractive in an age in which the Manchester School was supposed to have uttered the last word in economics.

The momentum generated in those days carried them safely to the close of the century; but there then began to appear symptoms of exhaustion. Their individualism, once their strength, now began to prove their weakness. They suffered huge losses: partly because they had never inculcated any doctrine of corporate religion in their own people, and thus failed to touch the heart of the new democracy which had begun to think about Socialism; and partly because their individualistic and far too

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subjective conceptions of the authority of religious experience eventually proved quite inadequate as a bulwark against the assaults of naturalism reinforced by critical scholarship.

The prospects of Rome were also darkened. The note of triumphant militancy seemed to falter upon her lips as the century wore to its close, for the rising sea of scepticism had eventually shaken even her confidence. This may seem to be an unsupported and doubtful judgement ; but the definition of Papal Infallibility was no sign of easy certainty. Superficially it looked like a sublime and confident defiance of the modern world ; but in reality it was dictated in accordance with a defensive strategy designed to secure the Church's position, rather than by an offensive intention against the strongholds of unbelief. As a matter of fact, Rome had fallen back to the task of self-protection. Consequently she became, as we have seen, the refuge of tired minds, and men went home to her merely for peace and quiet. The decadents who had been taking drugs now found her the most effective drug. Moreover, she had little consciousness of social message, and amidst the increasing signs of social discontent and disruption, the discussion of her claims began to appear artificial and remote.

The field was clearing for a fresh conflict, more significant and fundamental, that namely between a Christianity trimmed down and adjusted to fit the demands of the contemporary intellect, and a Catholicism preserving all traditional values yet willing, if necessary, to restate their terminology, while at the same time bringing them into relation with the

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practical need by showing their essential ethico-social sanctions.

Meanwhile the Oxford Movement steadied itself after the first collapse of its hopes, and its influence gradually permeated the Church of England. If it brought no dramatic victories to the national Church, it saved her from completely losing her self-consciousness; and in the later developments of Anglo-Catholicism there has sometimes arisen a passionate social idealism hardly surpassed in the Free Churches and certainly not in the Church of Rome. But for reasons we shall discuss later it was scarcely possible that Anglo-Catholicism could ever have provided the full and positive reply to the negative Liberalism which was now in the ascendant. It happened, however, that the philosophical basis of such Liberalism suffered so heavily under more searching investigation, while society's practical need of definite religious sanctions became so poignant, that unorthodoxy as a cult was disavowed by scores of its own apostles before any adequate Catholicism had been defined. This, roughly, was the situation of religion in this country while Mr. Chesterton was proclaiming the failure of the modern world; and it was an excellent opportunity for Rome to abandon her defensive attitude and resume her missionary labours. Unless there now speedily grows up in this country a Catholic interpretation of the Christian Faith which shall include the element of freedom, it is highly probable that our population, now largely divorced from all religious profession, will become either finally secularized or Romanized. Negative Protestantism is merely an out-moded reaction

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obviously doomed to speedy collapse. And evangelical Protestantism cannot say all that now needs saying.

It was given to Robert Hugh Benson, the son of an Anglican archbishop, to become the most popular and picturesque representative of the renewed Roman offensive in this country. If we select his work and witness for our special study, it is not because there are no profounder or more acute apologists for Roman Catholicism. There certainly are. But none has exerted equal popular influence in England, and probably none supplies a better criterion whereby we may judge the prospects of Rome in the actual circumstances of the present time. In saying this we must not assume that Benson, in making his submission to Rome, was completely aware of the opportunity which Romanism would shortly find in the development of life and thought. He considered himself to have found his way in the course of a deliberate search for the Church whose authority was established by definite historical proof; and we shall presently examine the growth of this conviction in his mind. But no matter what may have been the precise cause of his passing into the Roman communion, there can be no doubt that he achieved there a quite remarkable self-realization and that he learned to present the Roman case to the average modern man in a surprisingly forceful and attractive manner.

His development from the moderate promise of his early youth, through the Anglican period in town and country parishes and in the community life at Mirfield, to the position of public fame which

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he afterwards occupied, was in some ways extraordinary. It is not necessary to argue that the Roman authorities "pushed" him and made the most of him as a public advertisement because of his parentage and connections; such an argument is always small and pettifogging, and in this case it is demonstrably beside the mark. The fact is that Hugh Benson was going Romewards from the first awakening of his religious life; and in the Roman Church he found an environment in which his partially concealed talents could richly display themselves. Both as a preacher and as a writer he had won some notice before he left Mirfield; but the subsequent revelation of his powers can be understood only upon the supposition that he had come upon some affirmation which touched him with inspirational effect and brought the whole strength of his personality into tremendous activity. Often enough, Rome appears to have a quite different influence upon converts; but there is no question as to the nature of her influence upon Benson.

Early in his career as a Roman priest it was evident that his development had been suddenly accentuated, for his sermons in Cambridge attracted an amount of attention not to be explained merely by the interest attaching to his personal history. Already he was striking a note of furious certainty, and people heard it with not a little surprise. Here was a Roman attack in force upon modern rationalism and spiritual indifference: and the preacher gave proof that he really understood the prevalent modern fads and superstitions. He was no scholar in the true sense, nor was he a considerable philosopher;

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but he eventually became quite an authority upon the modern heresies.

When he passed from the limitations of the Cambridge Rectory to the comparative freedom of Hare Street House, he simply spent the whole force of a consecrated will in a passionate apostolate. He worked with a hard and hectic enthusiasm in which by the spoken and the written word he strove to utter the unutterable thing which he had seen. The febrile intensity of his life was altogether abnormal. He burned at white heat, and all his books at this period reflect in their very style the fierceness of that fire which, kindled in the soul of this apparently rather ordinary youth, consumed him at length, in the early prime of his manhood. His influence was wide and his frankly propagandist novels sold, as he himself said, "gloriously." As a spiritual director his advice was sought by such numbers of people that his correspondence grew to dimensions which would have appalled any man of less ferocious energy. Monsignor Benson is therefore a not unworthy exemplar of the renewed militancy of Rome.

Father Martindale's admirable *Life*, Mr. A. C. Benson's memoir, *Hugh*, and Monsignor Benson's own *Confessions of a Convert*, together with his other writings, supply us with ample material for the study of his conception of religion and his view of the task he felt called to perform. It is no part of our purpose here to discuss the literary merits of his books or to weigh his claim to be considered a great preacher. Father Martindale has discussed these matters with a singular balance of fairness and kindness. We shall do no more than study

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the demands of Rome upon modern Christians as those demands found vivid expression through the medium of this man's personality. We have admitted that Rome did something for him. What was the precise nature of his service for Rome? To discover this it will be necessary to acquaint ourselves with his own personal development, so that we may estimate the precise force and weight of his apologetic.

We have already described him as being rather ordinary in his youth ; and indeed, he showed no early signs of future distinction. Yet there were traits in his character, and incidents recorded of his early life, which make his final crossing to Rome easy to understand. Some, no doubt, will say that those traits and incidents display a streak of morbidity, which accounts for his later enthusiastic activity in a communion whose superstition and obscurantism appealed to his constitutional perversion. But as the very same people will explain the adherence of millions of uneducated peasants to that communion upon the ground that it appeals to plain, ordinary, unregenerate nature, we may dismiss the suggestion that Benson found his way to Rome because he was of morbid disposition. The particular characteristics to which we refer are not extraordinary ; but in him they do seem to have been present in unusual degree.

He had, for instance, a great love for " dressing up," and had been very proud of his appearance at his father's enthronement at Canterbury, looking as he afterwards affirmed, " p-perfectly charming in a little p-purple cassock and a little p-purple cap."

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All through life this instinct remained with him. In his undergraduate days at Cambridge he was once discovered with a pile of Japanese garments upon the floor of his room, and he explained to his apparently astonished visitor that he had "just been dressing up." He described his Monsignor's robes as "gorgeous." "Peacocks," he said, "aren't in it." A contemporary at Eton remembers a game in which Hugh took great delight, in which he pretended to be a monk, gliding about, clad in "a dressing gown with some sort of cowl to it." As an Anglican priest in later days he once went to stay with a Roman Catholic friend in Cornwall, and has himself described the excitement with which he wore his friend's cassock when he preached in the parish church. The same instinct led him once to don a friend's M.A. hood at a religious function.

These things may seem trivial, but taken in conjunction with other elements in his nature, they are important. As a child he was terribly afraid of the dark, and when asked upon one occasion what he expected might happen to him in a dark room, he replied that he feared he might "fall over a mangled corpse, squish! into a pool of blood." From his early years he had a strong interest in the occult; ghost-stories fascinated him, and at Cambridge he made an eager study of thought-transference and hypnotism, and paid some attention to spiritualism. He was at one period fascinated by the writings of Swedenborg. It seems, therefore, that in combination with a considerable dramatic impulse, he was by temperament attracted to the supernormal and invisible in a somewhat extraordinary degree.

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Now, the dramatic instinct has its religious value. It bears testimony to the secret dignity of human life. But when, as in Hugh Benson, it is conjoined with a characteristic concern with the unseen world, we may expect to discover the born *sacerdos*. Eventually there will arise the craving to express the invisible relations of human affairs, to carry the story of the human heart to the cosmic stage. This craving was submerged during Benson's youth. His taste for "dressing up" and his subsequent predilection for dabbling in the occult, did not suggest either to himself or to his friends his true vocation. But there comes a moment when a man must respond to the claims of his own gifts, or jeopardize both his gifts and his own soul. That moment came to Benson and he gave the right answer, still scarcely aware of what he was doing. After taking the decisive step into Anglican orders, he almost recoiled in hopeless despair; but who shall say that in choosing priesthood he was not following the call of God? There are many who found God by his intercession. And who shall say that in passing over to Rome he was not divinely led? There also he tended the Lord's flock and fed His lambs.

He, like some other distinguished converts to Roman Catholicism, believed not only that he was led of the Holy Spirit to his true way of life, but also that he had given the correct answer to the puzzles of history and logic which the controversy involved; and in his *Confessions* he records the collapse of his Anglican apologetic beneath the dialectic of Mr. Mallock as practically the turning point in his career. He probably was mistaken.

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Every man, in order to be sincere, must respect his own intellectual premisses: but others are not compelled to pay them equal respect. Benson's debating reasons for crossing to Rome were not profound; but he had reasons of the heart, reasons inherent in his own personal constitution. It is not a little absurd that a conversion such as Hugh Benson's should be hailed in any quarter as a demonstration of the superiority of the Roman argument; for, to speak truth, Hugh's equipment of knowledge even at this time was not so great as to lend much solemnity to his judgement upon a subject of such complexity as the quarrel between Roman- and Anglo-Catholicism. He was neither a scholar nor a theologian. At Eton and Cambridge he was neither strenuous in study nor distinguished in academic achievement. Seven years after his ordination he was thrown into serious mental confusion by hearing a few lectures from Dr. Gore upon the Synoptic problem. Father Martindale has printed a letter from Dr. Gore which throws considerable light upon the deficiencies of Hugh's theological equipment and upon his very slight understanding of the nature of the critical conclusions by which the orthodox position was confronted:

With regard to Benson (says Dr. Gore), I was very much attracted by him when he came to me at Mirfield, but became speedily conscious that his mind and mine moved in different planes. The most characteristic thing which I remember was an occasion when I found, to my great surprise, that he had never read the most usual commentaries on books of the New Testament, especially those by his father's friend, Dr. Lightfoot. I urged him to read them on account of their

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surpassing merit, but he came back after a time and told me that he would do it if I told him, but that he wished seriously to assure me that, if he were to consider such arguments about the authenticity of books of the Bible—arguments of the critical reason—and were to give his mind seriously to them, he feared he would become a sceptic. . . . With him it was "all or nothing." If he were to hold on to religion he must accept it simply on authority because of his moral needs.¹

Even in the department of general history, despite the fact that he wrote successful and brilliant historical novels, he seems never to have been a real student.

The dominant, in fact almost the only, explanation of Benson's crossing to Rome, must be sought in the sphere of his inner life and the needs of his religious development. There was with him, as we have noticed, an extraordinary need to cultivate strenuous reactions upon the world of external appearance. The world must be saturated with precise supernatural meaning or it would become devoid of any meaning; and his eager search for the supernatural was the sign that the deepest elements of his nature were coming into conscious control of his activities. Deeply embedded in his soul was the disposition to an insufferable *ennui* in face of the earthly commonplace unrelated to the supernatural. He perceived quite early, though hardly making any apperception, that this world is not enough. He was incapable of making the best of a bad bargain, when existence itself was the bargain. For him there must be the full assurance of God,

¹ Martindale, *Life*, vol. 1. pp. 191-192.

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or complete scepticism—and one imagines, also, a profound pessimism. Thus in religion he sought for a passionate intimacy with the invisible and for a dogmatic certainty which the respectable habit of the “moderate” Church of England school failed to supply. He regarded evangelicalism as more satisfactory than that; but the artistic objectivity of his mind would never have allowed him to find comfort as an evangelical. In the Church of England, however, evangelicalism has always been too timorous and lady-like a thing to have attracted Hugh Benson. Had he travelled in that direction he could not have rested anywhere outside the Salvation Army: for there is now little enough of the genuine thing in the Free Churches.

But his early environment at home was mildly sympathetic towards Catholicism, so that when his ardent spiritual longings awoke, their direction had already been shaped without much possibility of violent future revulsion. In any case, moreover, his æsthetic judgement would have recoiled from crudeness in religious expression. And it must not be forgotten that his religious quickening took place under the influence of *John Inglesant*, and that the sacramental conceptions adumbrated in that book profoundly affected him. The created universe is symbolic of the Eternal, but precisely for that reason it becomes imperatively necessary to read the symbol aright; and that involved, for Benson, the need for objective revelation and a sacramental system competent to be its continuous vehicle.

For a time he managed to be fairly happy in the Church of England. Mr. A. C. Benson has given

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us his impression that Hugh never was in a congenial sphere at the Eton Mission ; but although this is true, his interest in life and his gay friendliness procured him many friends amongst the humble parishioners of Hackney ; and as yet he had experienced no dissatisfaction with Anglicanism. It was merely that his temperament was unsuited to the demands of such work as he there found. Curiously enough, it was at Kemsing, where his surroundings were much more to his taste, that the first symptoms of religious restlessness began to show themselves : and at Mirfield, where the environment delighted him, he finally found his position intolerable.

It is not difficult to assign the main causes in Benson and in his outward contacts, which led to his severance from the Church of England. We have observed the natural intensity of his demand for dogmatic assurance in religion as well as for unrestricted intimacy with the supernatural ; and it was always certain that any attempt on his part to arrive at an evaluation of the historical claim of Anglicanism would lead to a crisis. His travels in the East brought home to him the comparative insignificance of his own communion in the general life of Europe ; and it seems that this consideration, together with the knowledge of how his own priesthood had been regarded in other lands, turned his mind in the critical direction. He found little peace, even in the calm holiness of Mirfield. He never complained of his treatment at the hands of the community—indeed, he was delicately and generously dealt with. But the fact was that between a Church whose ministry was divided upon the question of

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her Catholicity, and a Church which boldly claimed to be the one and only ark of salvation, Benson could not long hesitate. He did not possess sufficient critical faculty to reduce the Roman self-assurance to the test of a fundamental theory. He believed he had done this, but we shall examine the grounds of his belief when we come to study his subsequent apologetic for the Church of his adoption.

There is no great reason to regret that Hugh Benson entered the Roman communion. He probably would have found no supreme self-realization elsewhere, when once the doubt of Anglican authenticity had crossed his mind. His sacrament must be the perfectly valid sacrament; the authority upon which he was to rest must be clear, complete and self-assured. He was incapable of tolerating the thought of a partially valid communion, for his intense religious craving and his genuine priestly instinct would have needed to be balanced by a more searching philosophical acumen and a profounder historical sense than he possessed, if he was successfully to withstand the fascination of Rome. And, once established in the Roman Church, he wrought valiantly against the materialism, the indifference, the faithless coldness of the times, and he uttered a plea for Catholicism to which the world was compelled to listen. Certainly he found a gateway through which he entered into peace of heart, while at the same time he developed a furious vigour of will. He knew himself to be in communion with the saints of God; and he expressed his conviction in a passage of power and beauty at the close of his *Confessions* :

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What yet lies beyond I do not know : the towers of this City of God rise immediately into the clouds that are about His Throne ; the City is too vast, its streets too glorious, its houses too stupendous for any soul to dream that she knows them all or understands their secret. In this world, at least, not even the saint or the theologian, or the old man who has lived all his days within her walls, can dare to think that he has advanced more than a few steps within her heavenly gates. He stands within her, and, thank God, I stand there with him, as does every soul to whom God has shown this great mercy. But all of us together are but a party of children wandering in from the country, travel-stained, tired, and bewildered with glory. About us are the great palaces, where the princes dwell ; behind us that gate of pearl which, somehow, we have passed ; the streets before us are crowded with heavenly forms too bright for us to look upon ; and supremely high above us rises that great curtained stairway that leads to the King.¹

When one understands what the Church of Rome did for Benson, the tragedy of the divisions of Christendom is felt more painfully. He lost nothing of his manhood in finding his soul. He did not even sacrifice his tumultuous humour, and we recall with joy the huge delight which he took in boyish frolic. For example, he derived an intense pleasure from the knowledge that his friend Father Watt actually came from Ware. There are others, however, whose thirst for God and whose concern for Catholicism are as tormenting as his, who yet feel that to follow in his footsteps might not prove the best way home and might even involve the betrayal of a great vision.

His writings and his published sermons are for the most part designed to demonstrate the truth of

¹ R. H. Benson, *Confessions of a Convert*, p. 163.

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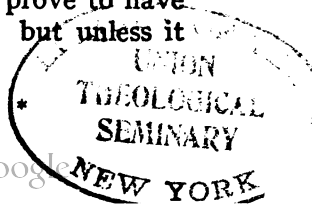
the Roman position as against the many religious and non-religious makeshifts of the age ; and as he formulated the task he was not seldom victorious. It was not difficult to convince any person of average intelligence that when Protestant school-books relate the history of the Elizabethan and Marian persecutions they do not tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Nor was it a very exacting labour to score heavily against the faddists and charlatans of " new thought." Perhaps Benson's most forceful novel is *Lord of the World*, in which he drew up a general indictment of the main tendency of modern secular society. Critics have fought battles about this book, some considering it his finest piece of work, others ridiculing it as mere melodrama. Certainly it is sensational, and the colours are put on with a heavy hand ; but when it is remembered that the book was never intended as a prophecy, but only as a parable, the criticism which objects rather to its *motif* than to its manner is disarmed.

Benson had seen with clear eyes that in the modern world there was a real danger, a threatening menace of human disaster. The danger was that practical positivism and irreligious humanism might come to supply the conscious and deliberate purpose of society, and that all the tendencies toward the recognition of human solidarity might be consolidated upon a basis of naturalism. He feared that men might become united in the worship of Man, and he knew, as every one who has thought about it knows, that this would eventually rend the last rags of human decency and utterly obliterate all human values. When man becomes his own god

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he must inevitably lose his self-respect. In *Lord of the World* this moral and spiritual perception is clothed in highly dramatic form. The problem is simplified by the supposition that before the opening of the period of the story, all Churches with the exception of Rome had gone down before the progress of secularism, so that there are but two protagonists remaining. And at the moment when the last witness for the supernatural seems about to be blotted out by the dominant powers of this world, heaven comes to the rescue, and the servants of Christ are vindicated in the end of the world.

Upon the main thesis of the book, that the unification of human existence upon a purely human basis would be disastrous, there is little need for comment. The close organization and regimentation of the whole world's life which should rule out religion and demand the total allegiance of the human soul to the dictates of a natural society would be an enormity compared with which the Cæsarism of Imperial Rome was a light yoke. Such humanism might succeed in making the race quite tidy and even respectable—at least for a time ; but it would always remain fundamentally inhuman. And if Benson's parable seem to some far-fetched, they cannot have considered the significance of the fact that while supernatural religion has been losing foothold in the modern world, the movements toward human solidarity have become strengthened, until they have promised to abolish at last, without the aid of any religious ideal, all barriers of race and caste. The world-war itself may prove to have been an agent of the world-republic ; but unless it



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is followed by a mighty religious revival and a storm of penitence, it will have no effect in aid of the Kingdom of God. We may refuse to suppose that nothing but a cosmic cataclysm can vindicate the Holy Catholic Faith in face of these movements; and we must not imagine that Benson himself believed that the only hope for the Church is the end of the world. Indeed, he wrote his next book, *The Dawn of All*, expressly to show that this was not his view. What he intended to proclaim in the earlier parable was the faith that the supernatural authority of the Christian religion could not successfully be disregarded, even though only a few men remained unapostate in the earth.

The true answer to secular humanism is to be found only in Catholicism; and, for Benson, Catholicism meant the Roman communion and nothing else. But we have now to trace the course of his apologetic for Rome, and to draw our conclusions as to whether or not the Roman Church possesses every vital gift and grace necessary to gather all the sundered and sceptical sons of men into one corporate and conscious fellowship in Christ. It hardly needs to be said that the claim for her unique position as the sole Church of Christ in the world occupied a prominent place in Benson's propaganda, and we may admit that he learned to present the customary arguments with considerable force and persuasiveness. Yet there is little evidence that he ever thoroughly grasped the contrary arguments, and his own reasons for dismissing them are unsatisfactory.

In his *Confessions*,¹ he has described how Mr.

¹ *Confessions of a Convert*, p. 104 et seq.

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Mallock's book, *Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption*, destroyed the foundation upon which he had rested his defence as an Anglo-Catholic. This, briefly, is the story : He had assumed that Catholic Christianity was now embodied in the Church Diffusive, of which the Roman, Eastern and Anglican communions were members or branches ; and he considered that the authority of the Church of Christ was to be discovered where the voices of these three Churches were in agreement. Mr. Mallock, however, after stating this theory very fully and clearly, goes on to argue that as the Church Diffusive, at any rate, did not agree upon this theory, that as there was no consensus of doctrine as to the existence of a Church Diffusive, the whole conception must therefore fall to the ground. Benson says that when he read this, he " gasped." We may be pardoned for gasping in turn at his ready submission to such an argument ; and we may perhaps be allowed to express our wonder at the " learned and zealous Anglican " to whom Benson propounded this dictum, and who, we are told, " could only say that it was too logical to be true and that the heart has reasons of its own which the head knows nothing of."

It is perfectly true that the Church Diffusive is not in agreement upon the teaching that the full authority of the Church is to be discovered only where certain outwardly divided communions happen to speak in unison. But that is no reason for abandoning the whole theory of the Church Diffusive. It is precisely the main reason for believing in that theory. If upon the question of authority all Christendom were in agreement, there would be no

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need of a doctrine of "diffusion," for the simple reason that there would be only one communion throughout Christendom. Surely the only reason why any sane man can believe in the Church Diffusive is that the Church Diffusive is not agreed that there is any such thing. If she were agreed she would not be "diffusive."

The claim of Rome, whether justifiable or not, to contain the sole source and seat of authority makes it essentially impossible that there should be agreement, so long as the theory regards Rome as part of the Church ; and why Mr. Mallock's argument should have made the slightest difference to any one who knew even roughly what was the Roman claim and what were the arguments against it, it is extremely difficult to imagine. The argument effects nothing at all ; for those who intelligently hold the diffusive doctrine do so in spite of the known fact that it is not accepted by part of the Church. Indeed, they hold it *because* it is not accepted by part of the Church. The argument, however, seems practically to have settled Hugh ; and we may trace the cause in his temperament rather than in any superior gift of logic

What remained for one who was dissatisfied with the theory of the Church Diffusive was to submit the Roman claim to a close historical scrutiny and to test it by the great formative conceptions of religion and ethics. We do not, for the moment, prejudge the conclusion. Devout scholars and profound thinkers have submitted to that claim ; but Benson appears to admit that the attempt to do this reduced him to hopeless confusion. He fell back

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upon Holy Scripture ; but his conclusions were unaided by any adequate knowledge of exegesis. The truth is that what attracted him was not the Roman argument but the Roman self-assurance. This, of course, may be a mark of the true Church, and at all events we wish that other churches possessed it in equal degree ; but the grounds of it are always debatable, and we conclude that they never were really debated in the mind of Robert Hugh Benson.

We who live and move in other communions may nevertheless envy the delight with which he realized himself in a Church which completely believed herself to be the veritable and only tabernacle of Christ in this world, even though we may think that he took what for us would be an unwarrantably short cut to attain such happiness. But having reached his goal, he promulgated the claim of Rome with high and self-sacrificing enthusiasm. She was for him nothing less than the continued and incarnate presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. "She is bone of His bone ; flesh of His flesh." "And what the Church's *claim* is," he wrote to a correspondent, "is that she is the MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST . . . this isn't a lovely metaphor. It is a Spiritual Fact. We are the cells which, added together in organic union, make up the actual Body of Incarnate God." * He holds such language constantly in his writings. Upon the faith that this definition of the Church is valid in the case of Rome alone, he founds both his defence of the religious characteristics of Catholicism as he discovered them in the Roman Church,

* Martindale, *Life*, vol. ii. p. 270.

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and his defence of authority as propounded in that communion. We shall presently inquire how far his premisses and his conclusions are mutually consistent, but we cannot withhold our admiration for the apostolic fervour of his advocacy. Our position will be that Roman Catholicism, by its definite witness for certain truths which need to be appropriated by the whole Church, and are completely valid only within the whole Church, gave to Benson that mental and moral support which enabled him to declare them with such fine and spirited abandon ; but that he was unconscious of the serious deficiencies which have resulted in Rome herself through her attempt to confine the exclusive proprietorship of those truths to herself.

The doctrine of the identity of the Church with Christ forestalls criticism of those "natural" elements, of that "materialism," which so scandalize Puritans and so rejoiced Benson himself. Now, often enough, the objection to these things proceeds from prejudice and mental confusion ; but those who attempt to construct a philosophical objection have to meet the argument that Christianity is based, not only upon the doctrine that "God is a spirit," but also upon the declaration that "the Word was made flesh." And it is a mean and narrow conception of Christianity which would limit the Incarnation to the brief life of our Lord in Palestine. One great meaning of His Resurrection is surely that it demonstrates that God's incarnational purpose was not frustrated by the crowning human disloyalty of Calvary : and that, incidentally, shows the spiritual logic of the narratives of the

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New Testament. No mere psychic phenomena would have conveyed this special truth which belonged to Christ's Resurrection and does not belong to any other personal survival. He must come back in the body that was crucified, to show that man's worst disaffection could not abolish the purpose of God to tabernacle with men. But unless that body natural had been succeeded by the Body Mystical, the Resurrection, while it declared God's purpose, would not have fulfilled it.

Now, it seems that the incarnation of God in the Body Mystical must involve the incorporation of natural modes of religious expression, as well as human arts and crafts, science and poetry, around the new and supernatural centre of life : otherwise there is no true incarnation. Human nature, as all nature, is to receive not condemnation but sacramental interpretation. The Puritans, as regards the Body Mystical, are mostly docetists : but just as the Church in her creeds declared that Christ's human nature was real, so, by the same principle, she is bound to assert that the Body Mystical must include the actual, normal institutions of mankind, uplifting them and ennobling them, even transfiguring them with sublimer meaning, but never calling them essentially common or unclean. Protestants will suggest that this may have been necessary in primitive Christianity : that in a credulous and uneducated age the religion of the spirit needed props and crutches ; but that such necessity no longer exists amongst the enlightened. But in offering this argument they overlook two very important considerations.

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The first is that the natural religious instinct of mankind does actually issue in an expressed sense of need for Incarnation ; and that the natural religious institutions thus appear to be a divinely moulded form in which the supreme religion of Incarnation may best be conveyed. If it be alleged that in the evolution of natural religion some base and unworthy elements have been retained, and if it be asked whether these have all to find a place in the Church's recognition, the reply is that the basest practices are at least the distorted expressions of some genuine human need. What is required is their reinterpretation and reformation. We are not pleading, for example, that human sacrifices should be offered upon the altar at St. Paul's. Yet obviously the institution of human sacrifice is at once a horrible and pathetic proof of the need to express corporate sacrificial life.

The second consideration overlooked by Protestants is the meaning of the fact that Christianity, upon its first introduction into the Roman Empire, did not immediately absorb the institutions of natural religion by which it was confronted. This task was only gradually performed. The customary argument that the accomplishment of the task was itself the sign of decadence and loss of spirituality may comfort some who have no objection to begging an important question. Strangely enough, while the contributions of Greek philosophical mentality are accepted without complaint, the contributions of Greek religious instinct are regarded with horror. But there is another explanation of the slow incorporation of elements drawn from natural religion

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which, to say the least, is quite as logical as the Protestant explanation. The Catholic case has been stated with great cogency by Benson himself, in a letter quoted by Father Martindale.¹ The letter was written from Rome :

It is extraordinary how out here one feels that all that was good in the old religions has been taken up and transformed in this . . . that is where Puritanism seems to fail. It has gone on perpetuating the exclusiveness of early Christianity, which was necessary enough until Christianity was out of danger of being absorbed, but is wholly harmful now that Christianity is strong enough to absorb everything else. A divine religion *must* include in itself natural religion, or it is simply a new natural religion itself—one more among the others. Isn't that the whole difference between sectarianism and catholicism ?

Father Martindale remarks, indeed, upon Benson's "ruthless recognition that that in which the spirit incarnates itself is flesh and nothing else."² While in *Lord of the World* we have the emphasis laid upon the spiritual heart and core of Catholicism, we find in *The Dawn of All* an illustration of the fact that "in his sacramental construing of life, he deliberately and rather brutally insisted on the human co-efficient throughout." Protestants, though often generously willing to admire the devout reverence of Catholics in their worship, are apt to wear an injured air if it is suggested that Catholics unite with their greater reverence a greater human heartiness and natural gusto in worship. It is only because Protestants know so very little about Catholics that they can

¹ Martindale, *Life*, vol. i. p. 307.

² *Idem*, vol. i. p. 287.

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ever imagine a tea-meeting, or even "choir anniversaries," to be the very height of holy revelry.

In some of his letters from Rome, Benson enlarges upon this combination of naturalness and devotion in the Italian worship. "The devotion of the people," he says upon one occasion, "was extraordinary—audible praying during Communion, and quite remarkable reverence, as well as complete freedom. The priest was perfectly rapt in prayer, but interrupted himself twice to spit." One tries vainly to think of a suburban nonconformist church tolerating either the priest's spitting or the audible prayers. But Benson seems to have experienced very little of that sense of strangeness common to converts. One cannot say that after his submission there was any noticeable reaction; and he was soon revelling in the "materialism" and "naturalism" of Catholicism as he found it in Rome. In his *Confessions* he defends his position in a passage of fine rhetoric:¹

Here was this city, Renaissance from end to end, set under clear skies and a burning sun; and the religion in it was the soul dwelling in the body. It was the assertion of the reality of the human principle as embodying the divine. Even the exclusive tenets of Christianity were expressed under pagan images. Revelation spoke through forms of natural religion; God dwelt unashamed in the light of day; priests were priests, not aspiring clergymen; they sacrificed, sprinkled lustral water, went in long, rolling processions with incense and lights, and called heaven Olympus. . . . In one sentence, I began to understand that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"; that as He took the

¹ *Confessions of a Convert*, pp. 154, 155.

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created substance of a Virgin to fashion for Himself a natural body, so still He takes the created substance of men—their thoughts, their expressions, and their methods—to make for Himself that mystical body by which He is with us always ; in short, I perceived that “ there is nothing secular but sin.”

But in spite of his sense of the reality of the flesh in which the Lord is incarnate, Benson did not neglect to declare the emphatic contrast between the Church and the World. “ The world ” is the flesh unsanctified as yet by the Holy Presence, whereas the Church is the material of the world caught up and controlled by the living Christ. We have already noticed how this contrast was marked in *Lord of the World*. Benson had the unfailing Catholic conception of the City of God set down amidst the kingdoms of this world to bring them into submission and to transform their glories in the light of her greater glory. The identity of Christ with the Church means a constant conflict between the Church and the world ; and not only did Benson set forth this conflict in parabolic guise : he saw it in history and painted its great occasions in daring colours.

Comparatively early in his literary career, in the historical novel, *By What Authority*, he chose the burning nationalism of Elizabethan England as an illustration of the powers of this world set over against the power of Christ. The submission of the Church to any national authority became to him totally abhorrent ; and he learned to exult in the contrast between what he considered the insularity of Anglicanism and the divine cosmopolitanism of Rome. He conceived that the Church must

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win the world by declaring her superiority to every human sanction and to every national loyalty. No matter how many kings and nations might bring their glory into her, no matter with what splendour the jewels of earth might gleam upon her altars, she was always the New Jerusalem coming down from God, the Holy Bride holding her children by a superhuman bond, a supernatural sodality, more loyal to Christ than to any tradition of blood or culture, shining with heavenly graces and glorious, if need were, with crowns of martyrdom.

To such a Church, God incarnate amongst men, the rock of their salvation, the mother of their hearts, authority must belong. We have seen that by the needs of his temperament Benson demanded definiteness in the authority which claimed his submission: he longed to hear the voice which could speak in assured tones. He eventually declared that for him the choice must be between the hard outline of Roman doctrine and complete agnosticism; but within the Church he believed the sure and unassailable truth of God was to be found. Because she is Christ's mystical Body her living voice speaks His mind. "This," he said, "is why she claims infallibility and indefectibility."

Now, this is a dogma without which no Church can ultimately escape falling to the level of a religious study circle. No Church can consider herself even the ambassador of Christ unless within herself she possesses the mind of Christ; and Roman Catholics may justly glory in the unwearying witness which Rome has given to the categorical authority of the Church. But the admiration of those in other

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communions is qualified by the two considerations that Rome has claimed to be the sole repository of that authority, and that she has focused the theory of her own authority in the decree of Papal Infallibility. Father Martindale thinks it necessary to remind us that the Infallibility of the Pope is not supposed to be a positive charisma ; but it is nevertheless a positive nuisance and has created enormous difficulties in Christendom. It will presently be our duty to inquire whether it does not actually antagonize any coherent conception of the Infallibility of the Church as the Body of Christ. Benson often spoke of the Church's authority in a richly mystical manner ; but, of course, he did not shrink from defending the doctrine of Papal Infallibility and that extreme centralization of government which has increasingly characterized Roman polity. Speaking of his experience in Rome, for example, he says :¹

I was as a boy introduced for the first time to some great engine shed : the wheels roared round me, huge, remorseless movements went on ; the noise and the power were bewildering : yet little by little the lesson was dinned into my head that here was something other than I had ever known, something I could never have learned in my quiet Northern twilight. Here were the business-offices of the spiritual world ; here grace was dispensed, dogma defined, and provision made for souls across the world. Here God had taken His seat to rule His people, where once Domitian—*Dominus et Deus noster*—God's Ape, had ruled in His despite, yet shadowing God's Vicar. . . . Here, indeed, if ever anywhere, has the heaven, plunged nineteen centuries ago by God's hand into the heaving soddenness of the Empire of

¹ *Confessions of a Convert*, pp. 157, 158.

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Rome, gradually expressed itself in law and dogma under images of secular thought; here was the blood of Peter, that soaked into the ground below the obelisk, pulsing once more in the veins of Pius—*Pontifex Maximus et Pater Patrum*—scarcely a hundred yards away.

In this passage, sincerely offered as a tribute to what he considered the self-evident efficiency and propriety of the papal power, Benson really provides ample material for a damaging attack. Broadly speaking, there are two great arguments against the Roman centralization of authority—arguments which touch the very heart of the Christian Faith while avoiding the contentious grounds of historical discussion. It really is not necessary to limit the controversy concerning the papal prerogative to the question of its apostolical derivation. There is no end to such debate, and the prospect of either side ever converting the other to its own view of history is excessively remote. If the historical vindication of the whole papal claim is a task of inordinate difficulty, it is nevertheless no easy work contradicting it from the standpoint of historical fact. One has first to catch his fact. The entire subject, vast enough in itself to provide study for a life-time, is beset with pitfalls in which great scholars have fallen and looked foolish. But there are perhaps more effective modes of dealing with the papal claim than by attacking its historical apologetic.

For example, if it can be shown that it is inconsistent with the manifest genius of the Catholic Faith, a self-contradiction within Catholicism, in opposition to the fundamental concepts and spiritual affirmations of the religion which it is supposed to guard;

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and if, moreover, it can be exhibited as gravely impairing the Church's significance as the type and sacrament of a new, redeemed social order, there must be such an overwhelming presupposition against it that its problematic historical basis will cease to have any importance. And, in order to call in question the monarchical centralization of the Roman system, it is not in the least necessary to resort to extreme Protestant conceptions of the nature of Christianity. There would indeed be little validity in such a procedure. Our point is that the Roman governmental system does not explicate the presuppositions of the Catholic Faith which the Roman Church professes, and has, in spite of heavy self-contradiction, in a measure maintained.

In the first place, then, we consider the theory of the Papacy in its relation with the theory of religion which it is supposed to uphold. Benson, in common with all true Catholic thinkers, gloried in the thought of the Church as the visible token of Christ's perpetual presence amongst men. For him, she was no mere independent witness. She was the Lord's embodied Self. It may be necessary to remind some people that this doctrine is neither superstition nor blasphemy, but simply the fruit of a fine mysticism. It is, of course, thoroughly scriptural, and is built upon two great correlated elements of Christian experience which are strongly emphasized in the New Testament. St. Paul's language concerning the indwelling of the heart by Christ cannot be condemned as the extravagance of an irrational subjectivism, when it is compared on the one hand with the testimony of the Fourth Gospel

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and on the other with the age-long experience of Christian men. And if the apostle is justified in declaring that he no longer lives, but Christ lives in him, there does not seem to be much theoretic error in identifying the Church with Christ—if the Church is composed of Christian people; and it certainly cannot be composed otherwise.

But there is a second line of thought in the New Testament which supports the High Church doctrine. The mystical indwelling of Christ is much more than an experience of isolated individualism. It is essentially a combining, socializing force, bringing the individual into communion with others in order that his own mystical experience may realize its greatest possibilities. It is what makes the Church; and all through the New Testament runs this corporate conception of the Christian life: Our Lord giving bread and wine, the symbols of his own Person, to twelve men at once; St. Paul declaring to the Ephesians that through Christ they were no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints; and the stupendous vision of the seer, who, looking for the Lamb's Wife, beheld a great city coming down from God. It is upon the fact of the incorporation of humanity into a new fellowship in Christ that the Church is founded and her true nature established.

Now, Roman Catholicism certainly does not deny the mystical indwelling of the believer by Christ. Mysticism and personal religion have sometimes flourished within its borders. Moreover, the glorious sacramental system of Catholicism expresses even more boldly than Protestants have dared to express,

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the Real Presence of our Lord in His Church. Upon the countless altars of this world is the one Sacrifice—Christ Himself in the midst of His people; and the broken Body is shared by millions of the faithful. But it certainly is difficult to understand, in the first place, how the doctrine of the indentification of Christ and the Church as set forth in the New Testament is improved by the assertion that God has “taken His seat to rule His people where once Domitian . . . had ruled in His despite.” And in the second place it is not easy to see how the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ upon the altar can be accepted by those who believe that the Real Authority of Christ is localized at the Vatican. The Roman theory seems to amount to this: that Christian experience, Christian sacraments and all the offices and ordinances of the Church are guaranteed only by the Pope. Fortunately for the welfare of practical religion, Roman Catholics do not customarily emphasize this logical conclusion from their own principles; though occasionally one hears it stated with an enthusiasm which seems like the blasphemy of fanatics.

But those Roman principles exist, and they are responsible for much of the mischief which has so damaged the Church and so often made of her a scandal to men of good will. They are a prime cause of the divisions of Christendom; and they have the effect also of making the whole range of Catholic practice seem perilously near to magic and mechanical formalism. Indeed, such authority has actually been bolstered up by sheer superstition and crass obscurantism. Protestants fail to comprehend

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how great numbers of Roman Catholics manage to maintain a pure and lovely spirituality and do not allow the logical implications of a monarchical Papacy to interfere with the spontaneity of their devotions. But Romans, upon the other hand, usually fail to understand that Protestants, looking upon the system from without, cannot help seeing the religious bearing of its governmental principles. And those principles have a positive and baneful effect upon the spiritual life of the Roman Church, despite all the genuine devoutness of its adherents. The modern theory of the Papacy, for example, deprives the conception of priesthood of much of its spiritual value and really tends to disfigure the sacraments with the mark of magic.

The centralization of authority in the hands of the Bishop of Rome seems to make every priest a vicar of the Pope and not in any direct sense a vicar of Christ. But the whole theory of authority derived "from above" omits from the conception of priesthood its representative significance and its testimony to the organic unity of the human race. There is, however, a theory of priesthood which is in closer harmony with the genius of the Christian Faith. If the source of all Christian priesthood is discovered in the High-Priesthood of Christ, the indwelling of all believers by Christ determines the Church as a priestly body: and the Church necessarily bestows upon her chosen and separated ministry a representative and expressive function. Such a conception is consistent with high sacramental doctrine: it is even necessary to give to sacramental practice its deepest meaning; and it

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has, moreover, a great advantage over caste-theories in that it cannot possibly lend itself to the mere externalizing of religion or to the spread of mechanistic or magical notions. For here the priesthood is guaranteed by the whole Church, by the nature of Christian experience, by the corporate religious life : it is not the Church which has to be guaranteed by the priesthood.

Now, this theory of priesthood certainly appears to harmonize with a more fundamentally ethical conception of authority and a more profound sense of personal spiritual values than modern Romanism can provide. It is true that the world is in desperate need of an authoritative Church : a Church which can speak with passionate conviction and with evident power ; and to this essential element in the Church's true character Rome has unwaveringly testified. But the nature of the basis upon which she grounds her authority happens to be one of the main reasons why the Church's testimony is so confused. It would be well if our Roman brethren would understand that with many of us, even with some Free Churchmen, there is no hatred of Roman methods of true devotion, but rather a loving respect for them and a sincere admiration for many of the gifts and graces of their great communion ; but that we conceive that the absolute monarchical Papacy, the culminating expression of a false sacerdotalism, depresses her religious value, hampers her witness and contradicts the heart and soul of the Faith. For, believing in the corporate interpretation of the Christian experience as the basis of the Church's institutions and as providing the evidences

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of the sacramental gospel, we think that the Church's authority must be grounded in that corporate life; and that priesthood and episcopacy must derive their sanctions through this channel.

When the papal authority is applied in the sphere of theological doctrine, as, for example, in the proscription of Modernism, we see its external and unethical quality. Scholars and theologians believe a certain proposition one day, and by the next morning's post they are forbidden to believe it. They therefore must cease to believe it. They may be loyal Catholics in intention and their theological judgement may be worthy of the highest respect. What then is the nature of the psychological process of their submission? And what is its value, except to produce the appearance of a machine-made intellectual uniformity? Is it greater than the value of the obedience of a private soldier to the drill sergeant? The drill sergeant, indeed, like the English Acts of Uniformity, allows men to think as they please, provided that they do as they are told; but the Roman religious authority imagines that men can, at the word of command, abandon beliefs which have been reached by great toil and held in strict conscientiousness, without incurring risks of disaster in their own souls. Such a theory of authority contains in its very foundations a psychological unreality which must cause its collapse sooner or later. We shall not here discuss the problem of Modernism. We are at present concerned with the theory of authority, and we must surely see that in a universe which is spiritual and not mechanical false doctrines can be defeated in the last resort

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only by their own practical development. Our Lord once spoke a parable concerning wheat and tares which has a direct application to this subject. Certain Roman apologists are very fond of remarking upon the "uncanny way" in which papal pronouncements have proved to have diagnosed the true instinct of Catholicism as that instinct has subsequently expressed itself. After reading their books one is left wondering what is the precise value of a papal pronouncement whose "uncanniness" has to be proved by the instinct of Catholicism. We would rather rely upon the instinct of Catholicism without the adventitious aid of "uncanny" prognostications. It is alleged that some Popes have failed to pronounce correctly and have had to submit to the correction of their theology at the hands of councils; but even had the Popes been always right, at least when speaking *ex cathedra*, their infallibility would still remain a non-moral mode of maintaining order. It is at best "uncanny," and the life of the Church is made to depend upon an oracle. This at least is true if the Infallibility of the Pope means the Infallibility of the Pope. If it means the infallibility of a certain group of doctors and administrators, or if it means the infallibility of the Church, our Roman friends would do wisely to tell us so.

The Papal Infallibility set forth as the fount of authority, besides being in contradiction to the religious genius of Catholicism, tends to destroy the Church's social significance. Benson gloried in the fact that "God's Ape" had foreshadowed "God's Vicar." Unfortunately for Christendom the shadow

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and the substance are much too nearly alike. The Pope of Rome in occupying Cæsar's seat does not sufficiently remind the world that Christ's crown was of thorns. Unless the Church is set in the world to exhibit society reconstituted in love, it is difficult to discover in her an adequate meaning for modern men ; but love in its complete ethical and spiritual development involves the recognition of the fundamental equality of persons. It involves democracy. There is something to be said for the suggestion that the autocracy of Roman Catholicism had its genesis in the fear of the barbarian menace and the confusion which was falling upon the Empire. If that is so, it is simply a gigantic monument of the failure of faith. The Church, at any rate, is now confronted by a world struggling to bring ordered liberty out of chaos. Political autocracy and plutocracy have set in motion the reactions of violence and anarchy : but the answer to the anarchist is not to be found in such conceptions of authority as those favoured by the late Abdul Hamid. It is impossible to say that the world can receive true guidance in solving its dominant problem from the constitution of the Church of Rome ; yet, if there is no conceivable balance between authority and freedom, human life itself is condemned as fundamentally irrational.

Roman Catholic priests commonly assert that within their communion they experience a great sense of freedom. That of course is true of all sincere Christian men ; and, indeed, when one has made utter submission of one's will to any demands, however irksome and unnatural, there is always some

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freedom left. Even "stone walls do not a prison make." That, however, is not the point. The question is, what is the nature of the authority which demands our submission? Does it include the co-operation of consecrated personality, not merely in obedience to its demands but in the formulating of them? Unless authority is drawn from the loyalty of those who are required to obey, it belongs to an imperfect stage of political progress. The Church speaks with the authority of Christ; but it is the *whole* Church which so speaks. And if the Church is to be upheld as the symbol of society perfected in the complete co-operation of redeemed persons: if her sacraments are to express the rich communion of life which God proposes as the social destiny of mankind, she herself must exhibit the power of the Holy Spirit to maintain that authority which is the direct result of autonomous personality being consecrated in Christ to the loyal service of the supernatural fellowship.

We survey the Roman claim to provide the sole and sufficient means of religious life in the coming days, and we are at once strongly attracted and repelled. We love her glorious descent—in spite of the fact that the glory has been sometimes darkly clouded. We love to behold her broad embrace, her arms stretched in a great gesture over many lands. We love to find her churches ever open: they seem to be the Holy Bride, saying "Come." From the environment of modern Protestantism, with its tendency to apologize for being religious, we are compelled to admit that Rome is often more evangelical than any of the sects. As the Protes-

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tants have grown more political, the Catholics have grown more devout ; and we believe, indeed, that the instincts of Catholic devotion are mainly quite sound. It is because we admire so many things in the Church of Rome, and because we so greatly need her, that we refuse to submit to her upon her own terms. We cannot think that it is of grace that she declares herself the only Church : we do not recognize any inspiration or spiritual confidence in her absolutist methods of government and order. And if she persists in these methods, she will prove herself finally as much a curse as a blessing. For it is a tragedy if there can be no ultimate alternative between a Catholicism which is the stronghold of reactionaries and obscurantists, and a revolutionary secularism which professes to be both the friend of freedom and the foe of the Faith. Our quarrel with the Roman Church is that she is not doing the best that might be done for the Catholic cause. She has an amazing opportunity which she seems unable to use.

Therefore we must conclude that Benson, notwithstanding all the ardour of his self-devotion, did not understand the real dangers threatening the Church of his love. He makes things look a little too easy. He took pains to understand the freaks and fads of the modern mind ; but he showed no signs of having grasped the principles of its just and sober demands. And he was not sympathetic toward democracy or keenly alive to the significance of the industrial turmoil of his time. We cannot classify him with those penitent decadents who with broken hearts and tired minds crept home to the Church.

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For him, Catholicism was a fighting religion ; but he never came within sight of its worst enemies. He was content to leave it so formulated as to exclude thousands of its most faithful sons. He was willing to accept as a sufficient Catholic authority that narrow unreality which could not even restrain Roman Catholics from shedding each other's blood in the service of militarists and financiers, Lutherans and Jews. He thus leaves those who love *both* Catholicism and freedom outside the high walls of Rome. They look toward her ; but they do not enter in. So far as she is concerned, they merely wonder and wait, and pray for a miracle. Meanwhile, the best thing that can happen for the religious life of our times is that the Roman Church shall be confronted, not with barren negations and irrelevant abuse, but with the concrete example of her own virtues liberated from the contradictions and limitations with which she herself has crippled them, and set forth in freedom for the evangelization of the world. There is only one Church to which Rome can ever make honourable submission ; and that is the Church Universal now in the throes of birth. In that Church there shall be splendour and strength, but humility also, and childlikeness. There shall be firm authority, and the freedom of the sons of God. She shall be the divine republic. Her Papacy shall speak of the certainties revealed to babes and to old women. Her priesthood shall offer the sacrifice of every contrite heart. And her gates shall be upon every side and shall not be shut at all by day ; and there shall be no night there. And into that Church, prayerful and penitent, we all must find our way.

IV

ECCLESIA ANGLICANA: HER PROBLEM AND OPPORTUNITY

THE modern world must discover the Church of Christ Universal before there can be peace and decency amongst men. The collapse of the attempt to base man's welfare upon an exclusive attachment to this world, the total failure of positivism to supply anybody with a reason for getting out of bed in the morning, leaves us in the old, pathetic position, listening for a word from the eternal silence and watching for signs from the invisible. There is unquestionably a disposition amongst men to listen to a religious account of life and destiny, and the mood has been induced very largely by the observation of social need. The religious affirmation which shall win the modern world must therefore contain the implications of organic society at its very centre; and that is why the Church as a religious conception begins to resume its place in quarters where it has been long neglected. It does appear that if civilization is to have any future, the Church must receive an importance in our teaching and practice not less than the importance given to it in traditional Catholicism.

Naturally, the confusion of the situation has

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caused us to look to that Church which claims to be the sole divine society ; and we have been disappointed. We seem to have discovered serious discrepancies between what she is and what she professes to convey. The spirit of Jesus does not seem to find a natural expression in her stiff gestures, and the ethic of the gospel seems sometimes in peril amidst the tangle of means whereby she upholds her authority. If she has not shrunk from declaring the life-giving paradoxes of the Faith, she has nevertheless cultivated contradictions which are destructive of faith. We are compelled to reject her overweening claim. And we accuse her of abrogating it by the sectarian spirit in which she has dealt with other Churches. She has not spoken as a mother to wayward children, but rather as a cross-grained and self-centred spinster aunt. She is now faced with the problem that there are millions of Christians who are not " Catholics," and that some of them are rather suspicious of the very notion of the Church. She, of course, puts this down to the wickedness of the world, and cuts us off.

We therefore must turn to seek a Church which makes or tolerates the Catholic claim in some definite but less stiff-necked manner ; and, as Englishmen, we are bound to hear the Church of England. Even though we feel that by the will of God we are called to labour in " denominations," and though we intend faithfully to hold the witness of our particular communion, we must necessarily examine the possibilities of the national Church as a step toward the Catholicism we are seeking. At any rate, she does carry the main stream of historic Christianity in

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this country, even though some may consider that she has unduly diverted its course and clouded its waters.

It is wise at this time to be candid ; but if we speak with some freedom, our object will be nothing less than to attempt to show what great gifts the Church of England may now bestow upon Christendom. She has set her hand to the task of securing her own autonomy, and she cannot complain that other Churches have seriously tried to hinder her ; but she has now to confront the more difficult labour of using for the good of all such liberty as she may win. The onlookers, as well as her own people, may well wonder what will become of her. She includes some who would gladly see her drawn within the orbit of Rome, and others who would not weep to see her become one more amongst the crowd of free " denominations " in the land. One thing is certain. She cannot, divorced from the secular sway, remain as she is at present, a chaotic assemblage unco-ordinated by any clear religious conception. There is, however, a work for her to do in which she may bless the nations of the earth. She may resolve her own inner discords in a positive synthesis. She may set forth a positive ground upon which Catholicism and Freedom may be held in organic union. Her future will bring her increasingly into contact with this problem ; but she cannot successfully approach it without making some very definite disclaimers and confessions. Her past and present limitations must be clearly recognized.

At the opening of Queen Elizabeth's reign an ecclesiastical policy was sketched out, probably by

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Cecil, bearing the title, "A Device for the Alteration of Religion." In these days the best friends of the Church of England are allowed to say the most unkind things about her; and we may hazard the remark that the Church of England has always had the appearance of a device for the alteration of religion. The author of the original "Device" expressed the fear that some people would call it "a cloaked papistry or mingle-mangle." The suspicion concerning the cloaked papistry was soon exploded, largely by the activities of the Pope himself; but three and a half centuries of toil and trouble have not removed the suspicion that the device ultimately adopted was indeed a mingle-mangle. And perhaps this cannot be more succinctly illustrated than by asserting that of the national Church two apparently contradictory criticisms are equally true. She is obviously the Church of England, for in no other place under heaven could she have arisen. At the same time she is not the Church of England, and never has been. The problem is further complicated by the fact that, in spite of all, she has produced a certain beauty of holiness, and a peculiarly sanctified type of scholarship, fit to shine amongst the many crowns of Christ. But the truth of the double criticism we urge against her is the twofold tragedy of religion in this country.

Whether the Church of England can rise above the limitations imposed upon her by the facts of her own history, and lead the way in the restoration of Holy Church, the future, perhaps the immediate future, must declare; but she will gain nothing by pretensions which ignore the determinative events

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of the past. And amongst those events are two which must not be forgotten. The first is that her breach with Rome was dictated by the political powers for political reasons: and therefore, if we are to consider her as the Catholic Church in England, we must conclude that the Church in this country was delivered from one bondage only to be delivered forthwith into another. The second fact to be steadily remembered is that all through the subsequent centuries she has never managed to fill the place occupied by the Church in England before the quarrel between the Crown and the Curia. She has lost the crowds and has always had strong religious conviction opposed to her in the very country whose name she bears.

She is rightly called the Church of England, because it is beyond dispute that both in the primary breach with Rome under Henry VIII and in her practically definitive settlement under Elizabeth, her government and constitution, and eventually her doctrinal poise, were determined in respect of the problems of the consolidation of the authority of the English Crown and the new orientation of English foreign policy. The Tudors made her an instrument of Tudor policy, and from that taint of secularism she has never yet been purged. The assumption that, because she is not in communion with the Bishop of Rome upon one hand, or with Lutherans and Presbyterians on the other, she is therefore the legitimate child of that Catholic Reformation for which the best hearts and brains in the world were longing, omits the consideration of facts and forces which go far to explain her troubled history and her present

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condition. She is the Church of official England : the England which has exploited religion and the shepherdless multitudes alike. Her clergy supported first the doctrine of the supreme governorship of the Queen, and later the doctrine of the divine right of kings. With changing times, they came to a tacit admission of the divine right of squires and landlords. And unless they entirely dissociate themselves from the doctrine of the divine right of plutocrats and profiteers, the Church of England will go down in the coming crash of that false England after which she is named.

Her more poetical and imaginative historians have loved to see in her the resurgence of the Ancient British Church, coming from the misty past and long concealment, to dwell again within these happy coasts. One does not wish to be thought perversely incredulous, but one can only say that if the Church of England is actually the reassertion of Celtic Christianity against the Latin authority so sternly enforced by Augustine at the beginning of the seventh century, she does not look much like it. We cannot believe it, even though we remember that the monarchs who captured her were of Celtic origin, and that the Prime Minister in office when she at length began to pray for freedom was a Celtic Baptist.

Dr. Gasquet has effectively dealt with the attempt to show that the English " Reformation " was inevitable, and that the " divorce question " had little to do with it. He seems to stand upon very strong ground when he distinguishes between " reformation " and " *the* reformation." It was certainly necessary that something should be done for the

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Church in England as elsewhere at that particular time ; but the assumption that what was done was the right thing, and that it was a deliberate attempt to restore an undefiled Catholicism, is one which asks us to forget the whole shape of English history. And the Abbot is able to produce the dictum of Dr. James Gairdner, " That which we call *the* Reformation in England . . . was the result of Henry VIII's quarrel with the Court of Rome on the subject of his divorce, and the same results could not possibly have come about in any other way." ¹

But it was not only in her first rupture with Rome that the Church of England received the mark of what the Book of Revelation calls " the beast." The settlement of her doctrine and order after the Edwardine and Marian interludes can be shown to have been moulded far more in accordance with the necessities of statecraft than with any firmly held theory of Catholicism. In the long squabble as to whether she is intended to be Catholic or Protestant, it has usually been overlooked that she was probably intended, by those who captured her, to be neither. She was intended to be quiet. This is not to say that within her communion there are no true Catholics and no true Protestants. There are both ; and how they manage to lie down together in one fold (if they do) is a mystery which may yet show, when it is revealed, that God overrules the pettifogging wisdom of kings and queens for His own glory.

It was the Elizabethan policy which was responsible for so hampering the English Church that she

¹ Gasquet, *England under the Old Religion*, p. 91.

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was henceforth unable either to come to terms with religion in Europe or to deal effectively with religion in England. The main problem presented to the shrewd mind of Queen Elizabeth was not the restoration of pure and undefiled religion to the Church, but the restoration of security to the national executive. She intended to be Queen of England at all costs; but from the first moment of her reign she believed that if she would be Queen of England she must be mistress of English religion. She had to balance probabilities with great delicacy of judgment. She knew that in the eyes of Catholicism she was a bastard, her father's divorce from Katherine of Aragon never having received the Church's sanction; and she was therefore bound to be suspicious of the Latin powers. But the future of the Protestants was uncertain; and to risk political capital for the sake of religious idealism was not a course offering great attractions to the Virgin Queen. Had policy demanded it, she might eventually have handed back the reins of ecclesiastical government to the Pope, though she would never have permitted another to do it for her. As a matter of fact, her masterful character, aided by the skill of Cecil, adumbrated, if only semi-consciously, the long future, not only of ecclesiastical but also of secular policy. For amidst much groping and hesitation she managed to discover the political value of insularity in the world which was then coming to birth.

It was this dominant trend toward insularity which determined the reconstruction of the English Church, and from the first the Queen and her imme-

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diate circle of advisers approached the task from a purely secular standpoint. Her preliminary consultations were not with churchmen, but with statesmen and lawyers; and, as we shall presently see, she insisted on the rights of churchmen in later days—usually when they promised for the moment more docility than the politicians. It is true that when the Supremacy Bill was brought in she refused the title of Supreme Head of the Church and accepted the title of Supreme Governor; but if any man can believe that this was the result of modesty, his touching faith is too frail a bloom to endure the rough winds of real history. Elizabeth was doubtless thinking of possible contingencies which might make the former title highly inconvenient. She had not then been excommunicated, and the Spanish Armada had never been dreamed of.

She was wise in her caution. It was possible to say that her supremacy would involve no claim over the Church which had not been made by Justinian and Charlemagne and by previous English monarchs. The Supreme Governorship of the Church gave her the right to ensure that the laws of the Church should be properly administered by the Church's officials. It seemed a slight difference between the old claims of monarchs and the new position allotted to Elizabeth that the Church had now no power to make her own laws or appoint her chief officials. When Elizabeth became Supreme Governor, the Church of England fell beneath the control of those forces which were ultimately to produce the modern House of Lords, Mile End and the *Daily Mail*. If the Holy Rood disappeared, there came a time when the

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Union Jack was introduced, reserved, carried about, lifted up and worshipped without any disturbance being caused.

It was all shadowed forth when Queen Elizabeth, coming to Westminster to spend the Christmas of 1558, instructed Bishop Oglethorpe that in celebrating Mass he was not to elevate the Host. At the time the religion of England was Roman Catholic, and the English people were considered to be in communion with the Holy See; but the Queen had no scruple in ordering a Bishop of the Church to observe her will in the most sacred exercise of his office, in defiance of the Church which had given him his commission. In that royal gesture we find the true basis of the Anglican settlement; for though Oglethorpe refused to obey, the royal chaplains subsequently celebrated Mass in accordance with the Queen's desires. The orb was at once turned upside down and the cross was now underneath, to be used as a handle.

It is true that the new service of Cæsar was veiled with garments of decency. The Act of Supremacy provided for the exercise of the Queen's authority by a body of ecclesiastical commissioners, thus providing an ostensible check upon any despotic tendencies in the royal government of the flock of Christ. Elizabeth, however, had methods of dealing with her executives, whether ecclesiastical or political, and in any case the commissioners were ultimately no more than the instrument of the royal will. And if parliaments became too eager to mould that will, she knew how to play off the spiritual rights of the Church (now vested in herself) against

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the legislative powers which were being ever more strenuously claimed.

She insisted, for example, upon the right of Convocation to initiate ecclesiastical measures, when the Commons proposed ecclesiastical measures which she found distasteful; although Convocation had little to do with initiating the "reformed" Church of England. But her respect for the opinion of the Church may be gauged from her attitude in the affair of Archbishop Grindal, who had been ordered by the Queen to put a stop to the prophesyings which were encouraging Puritanism within the Church. He was content merely to regulate them, with the result that he was sequestered. When a petition was sent by several bishops in the archbishop's behalf, it was simply ignored. The Catholic practices of Oglethorpe and the Puritan sympathies of Grindal were alike trodden down in the interests of a "settlement" which required a standard of uniformity much too closely related to the political policy of insularity to represent the religious realities of the national life. For, though this is a tight little island, and has been the birthplace of many noteworthy movements, it cannot claim to have invented the Christian religion, and it really is not big enough to contain the Holy Catholic Church.

In spite of her assertions of the rights of Convocation as against Parliament, there can be little doubt that Elizabeth never intended to tolerate any rights of Convocation as against her own designs. In view of such considerations, the *Declaration of the Queen's proceedings since her reign*, which asserted that her authority was no greater than that of her

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predecessors, and involved the duty of maintaining the execution of the Church's laws, must be set down as mere advocacy. The Church could have no laws displeasing to the Queen and her counsellors. They may have honestly believed that in order to preserve and glorify the English realm they were justified in making bye-laws for the City of God ; but they helped to destroy religion in England. It was not that they and their supporters were malicious. One cannot charge Archbishop Parker with being a deliberate traitor to the spiritual cause. But the task was misconceived. The long concentration of religious authority in Rome had this disastrous effect, that when the nations became too strong for the temporal power of the Pope, the sundered portions of the Church were so lacking in initiative, so accustomed to control from without, that they fell unresisting into the hands of princes and politicians, where they lay contentedly for centuries. This is exactly what happened in England. ♪

The Church of England became a persecuting organization, demanding, sometimes in that quiet, ladylike manner which is one of the characteristic marks of Anglicanism, but sometimes rudely enough, the desertion of old religious ties and the crushing of new religious convictions. The scope of high treason was for her sake extended : which is simply to say that for the sake of the civil power she allowed herself to become the occasion of the imprisonment and murder of Christian men. It is strange that apologists should believe that the Elizabethan persecutions are effectively explained away when they are shown to have been punishments for high

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treason. Of course they were punishments for high treason ; but that is precisely the measure of the Anglican shame. It may be argued that the attitude of the Pope forced the English Government to regard Roman Catholic missionaries as its enemies ; but it is still possible to reply that although most of the troubles of the Papacy were due to its usurpation of temporal powers, no true remedy was discovered when temporal princes usurped the spiritual powers of the Church. If the Catholic recusants placed the Government in a predicament, the Government had already placed them in a predicament. And if the recusant martyrs " died for the deposing power of the Pope,"¹ for what did the Brownist martyrs die ? They, too, denied the rights of secular princes to dictate the policy of the Church.

We shall presently see that the Elizabethan Settlement, so far from being the result of any revived religious enthusiasm, was actually accompanied by serious religious decline. Nor is such decline to be wondered at, in view of the treatment meted out to the Church by the new Supreme Governor, who increased her own revenues by deliberately keeping sees vacant and set an example which had a most demoralizing effect upon the clergy. The Church of England does not seem to have leaped for joy in her new-found possession of pure and pristine Catholicism ; and the character of the new episcopate and the general tone of church life during the period yield a somewhat unpleasant impression to those who think of the Church as essentially militant and

¹ See W. H. Frere, *The English Church in the Reign of Elizabeth and James I*, p. 221.

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missionary, the spotless Bride of the Lamb. After the death of Parker this depression becomes accentuated. We may study the conclusion of a loyal and devoted Anglican scholar upon the subject :

Much time and heat were expended by the bishops in quarrels among themselves about their dilapidations, or with their neighbours about their leases, or with their officers about their jurisdiction. There was a large proportion of the new set of bishops whose administration never rose much above this level, while it readily descended to self-seeking and even dishonesty. The blame of all this belongs in large measure to the Queen.¹

During the ensuing centuries the Church of England was to produce from time to time good men and great ; but not until she had rudely exiled religion with Wesley, and received it again from Keble and Newman, did she begin to awake to the problem of her place in Christendom and to the enormity of her task in England. It is certain that in order to take her place and perform her task, she must now be not merely reformed but revolutionized. For she has too long crystallized in her constitution a governmental England, its aims and its difficulties, which have little relation to modern realities. Even in the poise of her official theology she reflects the Elizabethan settlement of international policy.

It must be insisted that the Queen's theological attitude was always largely determined by consideration of foreign political relations ; and if the Church of England is a *via media*, it is because England under Elizabeth eventually began to realize the possibilities of political detachment. Amongst the

¹ Frere, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

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patron saints of our national Church, Grenville, Hawkins, Raleigh and Drake ought to be accorded high place, for a collapse of secular policy would, beyond all doubt, have determined a very different line of progress, either toward Rome, or toward Geneva, or elsewhere. In the early days of the reign, and while her position was still insecure, it was quite uncertain what the Church of England would be like when Elizabeth had finished with it. At that time she explained to the Spanish ambassador how much she believed about the Mass ; for the Spanish alliance was then of importance for the balance of power in Europe, and when the interest of Spain was required, the Queen usually managed to discover some tender emotion toward a Catholic aspirant to her hand. When Spain had to be cajoled or alarmed, she could talk Protestantism with equal freedom. And although there was no law against the ornaments used in her chapel at the wedding in 1559, the facts that they were not then in customary use in the chapel, and were introduced for the occasion, and that the Archduke of Austria, her latest Catholic suitor, was likely to be present, make it impossible to take her religion seriously.

It is impossible for a true Catholic of any denomination not to harbour some deep regrets that this monarch's policy kept the English Church out of the Council of Trent. She had recently told the Spanish ambassador that she was as Catholic as any in the kingdom, and for a time the future of religion in England hung in a doubtful balance. At one time the Queen was ready to promise to conform to the decisions of that Council, and was troubled

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that the Pope, by not consulting her concerning the calling of it, had apparently regarded her as a Protestant. Who knows what she would have said if the Pope had consulted her?

The fact is that while there may be a great place in Christendom awaiting the Anglican Church when she has the courage to see visions and dream dreams, the place which she at present occupies was largely determined for her by the designs of a woman of whom John Richard Green has said that in the profusion and recklessness of her lies she stood without a peer in Christendom, and that no other woman who ever lived was so totally destitute of the sentiment of religion. Until the Church of England has expunged the slur and stigma of the Elizabethan Settlement, her influence in Christendom will always lack some elements of spiritual power.

The one characteristic of the situation which made the whole transaction possible was that for the moment the Crown and the nation were united in a rising and somewhat flamboyant nationalism, and that the Queen at her worst was tolerated and at her best was worshipped. While Edmund Spenser could idealize her in romantic verse and a galaxy of heroes could behold her only as a radiant symbol of virtue, the intensified national consciousness effectively submerged those loftier considerations whose operation would have been necessary to save the Church. And the Erastian argument always derives some force from the fact, already noticed, that the Church appeared quite unable to save herself.

It thus becomes somewhat difficult to accept the

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Anglican Church as clearly representing the genuine Catholic tradition, set free from the degrading accretions of Rome, and yet avoiding the revolutionary and anarchic developments of continental Protestantism. The Queen informed the Emperor, in response to his request for some degree of toleration for Roman worship, that the English religion was that established upon the consent of the Fathers, and that therefore no variety of rites could be allowed. This, of course, was substantially the position of Bishop Jewel, the leading apologist of the *via media*. Jewel was a great scholar; but what would the conclusions of scholarship have availed had they not chimed with the political schemes and shifts of Her Majesty? But the best scholarship then available was inadequate to the task of reviving primitive Catholicism. We know that in recent times the conclusions of scholarship concerning the relation of Catholic doctrine and practice to Christian origins have undergone remarkable revision, with increasing emphasis upon the likelihood of early and rapid development. At all events, the past half-century has seen amongst Anglicans a growing discontent with the Elizabethan Settlement as providing a *via media* upon which informed men can walk with any comfort. From a struggle to obtain the admission of a more Catholic interpretation of the Prayer-book, there has now arisen a temper of criticism toward the Prayer-book itself. And those valiant and watchful Protestants who regard this as a sign of complete wickedness in their Anglican brethren are betraying their total failure to apprehend the situation.

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The assumption that the sixteenth century could reproduce Catholicism as known in the sixth century was sufficiently crude. How subtle and yet all-permeating the changes of atmosphere during the long lapse of the intervening generations! How difficult to avoid innocent distortion of facts only partially understood! Moreover, if development was admitted to have taken place within the undivided Church, why must it be deemed totally invalid in the various sections of the divided Church? The Elizabethans had not got so far as to deny that Rome was a Church; they essayed only to delete all developments presumed to have taken place since the early schisms. But their equipment for the task was necessarily insufficient, even if the task itself had been worth undertaking. Their attempt suffered, too, under the pressure of Protestants, who openly denied the whole Catholic system; while its basal motive was not so much zeal for ecclesiastical reform and spiritual enlightenment, as the desire to accomplish the integration of English nationalism.

We know, too, that in spite of the national loyalty to which it appealed, the attempt met with vigorous opposition from very dissimilar quarters, and was received in many parts of the country with only a cold and grudging submission. While in the home counties, near the seat of secular government, there was not very great difficulty in putting into practice the Act of Uniformity, conditions were otherwise in a number of districts. When Grindal became Archbishop of York he found the people "much exasperated and panting for renewed disturbances."

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He discovered that the "old religion" had never really been ousted, and he felt as though he had come into "another Church." ¹ Even in East Anglia and in London, which by geographical position in one case and by metropolitan attraction in the other were exposed to the influences of continental Protestantism, there were strongholds of recusancy. On the other hand, Puritanism within the Church was growing more emphatic and courageous, and lifting up a challenge to the official "settlement" which was eventually to issue in grave effects. And concerning Puritanism within the Church, it must be said that its best and strongest character was never evoked by the vestiarian controversy or upon the question of Eucharistic doctrine. Those issues attracted Puritanism in its more noisy and truculent representatives. The Puritans became a power in the land in opposition to an episcopate demoralized by the fact and the example of the Royal Supremacy, and their noblest apologetic was always more ethical than doctrinal.

What happened, therefore, in the construction of the *via media* was that in order to be English it became religiously more a negation than a well-founded and positive conception. It was defended negatively as against Rome upon the one hand and Geneva upon the other. The resulting vagueness is reflected specially in the Eucharistic doctrine as set forth in Article XXVIII, where, although the main concern appears to be to deny the doctrine of transubstantiation, there is no clear indication whether the Tridentine definition must be repudiated or

¹ Frere, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

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allowed. The consequence is that confusion has developed to such a degree that a despairing tolerance has become the only *modus vivendi*. The *via media*, theologically considered, has always proved itself an extraordinarily difficult tight-rope, and it must be held largely responsible for the amazing degree of dogmatic collapse in England. The Church which accepted it might have anticipated trouble.

What delayed the trouble was the change of attitude, upon the part of the Pope, from passive observation to active opposition. The excommunication of the Virgin Queen, and later, the coming of the Armada, blessed by the Pope to the destruction of this realm, were strokes of great good fortune for the national Church. They gave her the appearance of consolidation which she had by no means spiritually attained, and they found her, for the time, some place in the affection of the country. She then began to look as if she might perhaps become the Church of the English. She was certainly then securely founded as the Church of the English Government ; but she was then first tainted with the English pride. She came near to repeating the sin of the Roman See. As the Empire of the Cæsars passed into the Church of Rome, so the Empire of the English won the heart of the English Church. Whatever her Articles of Religion may teach or deny, she herself became the Church of the English Power, and for a long period she was in communion with no other Church and had no desire to be. She was the Church of the English Power ; but not of the English poor. Only with the revival of the nineteenth century did she begin to find tears

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for the broken and scattered multitudes. At the beginning of her career as the handmaid of the Government, she had accepted Article XXXVIII, which points out the serious mistake committed by the primitive Church in having all things in common. And when with the political and economic developments of later times the gulf between official England and the English people yawned with social menace, she was seen standing upon the wrong side of the gulf.

When the issues of Humanism and the Renaissance had forced upon the modern mind a reconsideration of scripture and theology, it was finally manifested that the *via media* had never been a religious synthesis, but only a policy ; and to-day the future orientation of the national Church is more in debate than ever. No more than the "denominations" does she offer any vital message to the modern mind. Like them, she possesses scholars and thinkers ; but there is nothing in her behaviour in this generation to suggest that she has preserved greatly more than others such a full, living and balanced complex of faith and order, as may give her the right, as she stands, to challenge the world, or even the England, of our times.

At any rate, her dominating national characteristic gravely prejudices her claim to a living and significant Catholicism. It does make her assertion of her inheritance of reprimed Christianity seem not a little useless, since it would be strange if the creation of Tudor statesmen were so faithful a reproduction of centuries long passed away ; and it does cut her off from the rest of Christendom within and without

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the national boundaries. It is true that she has preserved much of the appearance of the historic Catholic order. The authorities at Rome deny that there is any substance beneath the appearance ; but whatever may be the termination of that dispute, it must be confessed that she began by allowing herself to be placed in a position in which she could never long be sure how much even of Catholic appearance she would be allowed to keep. Yet, even so, though paying so heavy a price for the prestige of the national title, she remains convicted of a signal and historic failure. For the Church of England she is—and is not.

The second of the main indictments against her is that she is not the Church of England and never has been : in the sense that in her origin as a finally distinct and separate Church she did not arise by the religious emotion of the people of this land, and from the moment of the “ settlement ” found considerable and increasing opposition and neglect from large and virile sections of the community. This is not to say that she has never awakened in her supporters a tender loyalty or in outsiders a respectful admiration and sometimes even a great longing. We know that many of her sons are her devoted lovers ; and we remember in what wistful words Father Tyrrell apostrophized her. We recall how Hugh Benson could speak of her with gratitude, even when he had left her for ever. Some of these things, however, could be said with equal truth concerning the Free Churches. Presumably even the Plymouth Brethren are loved by Plymouth Brothers, though that sect has so far failed to arouse

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the enthusiasm of England, or even of Plymouth as a whole. And it has to be pointed out that the Church of England largely failed to carry on the full religious life of England, for the plain reason that it was not the religious life of England that called her into her present state of being.

It cannot be too often repeated that the actual English Reformation was not the spontaneous result of any intellectual dissatisfaction with the central doctrines and devotions of historic Catholicism. Wyclif's influence had practically disappeared, and there is no evidence that it operated in the construction of the doctrinal formularies of the Settlement. The leaders of the Renaissance in this country were not in revolt against the Catholicism which they knew, though like the greatest and best of continental Catholics they would have rejoiced in the "reformation in head and members," which was almost universally called for. So far from the English Reformation being the result of an intellectual awakening, it seems to have operated in some respects as a cause of darkness.

Nor can it be said to have spread religion amongst the common people. Much evidence goes to show that it found England at least practising the customs of religion, and left it, in spite of compulsions and fines, indifferent. While the great body of the clergy eventually subscribed to the Act of Supremacy, it is clear that the new regime was not received with enthusiasm. In the north, even in places where the clergy submitted almost without exception, the Bishop of Carlisle had no doubts about their secret thoughts. He referred to them as "wicked imps

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of Antichrist, and for the most part very ignorant and stubborn, past measure false, and only fear maketh them obedient." This is an interesting revelation of the spirit which often accompanied the new settlement. All we lack is an equally vivid account of what the "wicked imps" thought of their bishop.

There was no greater longing for the new order amongst the masses of the people. The Abbot Gasquet has summarized the evidence showing the favourable aspects of the religious life of England in the fifteenth century. He points to the fact of regular church attendance and to the love which covered the land with beautiful churches.¹ It may be that this Roman Catholic unconsciously idealizes what he sees ; but some of the best modern Anglican historians present us with judgements not entirely dissimilar. We find it admitted, for example, that after the Act of Uniformity, with its provisions for enforcing church attendance, there was not only a growing negligence of the people during divine service,² but also a distinct and painful decline in public attendance.

The recusant in his youth had seen the churches thronged every day by worshippers ; now he saw the doors beginning to be closed from Monday to Saturday, the people giving up their daily worship, and coming down to a mere attendance on Sundays and a rare communion made for conformity's sake. It is not surprising that to some, and to some of the best, even the abuses of the old system were dearer than the reforms of the new.³

¹ Gasquet, *op. cit.*

² Frere, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

³ Frere, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

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The writer is surprised, and not without reason, that recusancy was not more common, and he explains its comparative rarity by supposing that there must have been a deep dissatisfaction with the old order. Even if we grant that such dissatisfaction existed as would eventually have caused a breach between England and Rome, we are not therefore compelled to believe that what actually took place was the only, or the best, possible occurrence. And it is at least impossible to show that there was any fervid welcome for the "new order." For the same writer, speaking of the campaign of the Roman Catholic missionaries inaugurated in 1574 for the conversion of England, describes the condition of the English Church in plain words :

They came to the task full of enthusiasm and piety, and they deserve the credit of it : they looked upon the religious condition of England as worse than heathenism, and this is not very surprising when it is borne in mind how rapidly religion had been going from bad to worse. The sacraments had dropped almost out of sight, the churches were profaned and closed, piety was decayed, and a gloom of spiritual apathy had settled over the land . . . and there seemed no clear prospect that the English Church would now recover from the low state of energy to which a succession of severe operations had brought it.¹

Thus it is difficult to believe that, in the sense in which we are now speaking, the Church of England was ever the Church of England. But the stabilizing of ecclesiastical affairs upon a basis of political relations, even had it met with far greater temporary success at the outset, would have proved impossible

¹ Frere, *op. cit.*, pp. 207, 208.

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with the developments of time. The Elizabethan Settlement was to prove one of the most unsettling and exacerbating compromises ever arrived at in the history of the Church. While national consciousness was specially strong, and Church consciousness specially weak and divided, the compromise brought a momentary peace; but the slightest change of public mood would hereafter inevitably induce whirlwinds and deluges.

There is, of course, a case to be stated for Elizabeth's ecclesiastical policy; but unfortunately for the Church of England and for the cause of religion in this country, the more impressively that case is now stated the more entirely obsolete does it appear. Mr. Chesterton has remarked that the period was not one in which England discovered her greatness, but one in which she discovered that she was small. That may be true, but what is really important is that she then discovered that she was England. The capital fact was that she was turning from the old European orientation, to shape a more individualistic insularity. The Elizabethan statesmen, of whom the Queen was perhaps the chief, intuitively grasped the new direction of the nation's life, and the already confused condition of the Church made it possible for them to reduce the forces of religion to compliance with the requirements of national development. They buried the perpetual menace of heavenly revolution and sealed the tomb—with the Great Seal of England. The Queen, who almost miraculously came to symbolize the new England was of necessity made the mistress of English religion. Soldiers and sailors invented a cult of

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another Virgin. Henceforth the Holy Ghost must study the manners of the English Court ; and the Church's ministry became for a time a royal priesthood after the order of the Vicar of Bray.

But that England no longer exists ; and that is what we would implore the leaders of the national Church to consider. She is face to face with a new world. The secular seat of her government has been captured by the crowd, who never showed much desire to sit in her pews. From Elizabeth to Victoria, in spite of stormy interludes, National, Conservative, Royalist, Official England remained ; but that order has passed for ever. The Church of England is its sole surviving relic. The question is whether she can now withdraw her gaze from the burning city of her past before the worst fears of her best friends are realized and she is turned into a pillar of salt. She has to face a world in which the exact nature of her nationalism will be her chief stumbling-block ; for neither the policy of splendid isolation, nor the developed self-satisfaction of the island race, has availed to prevent the English being involved far more completely in the life of all mankind than they were involved in the life of mediæval Europe. Moreover, it is certain that if the Christian Faith comes back to the modern world, it will insist upon putting the Cross not only above the world, but above the English flag.

The Church of England, in order to prepare herself for a great constructive contribution to a renewed Christendom, must cease to be merely the Church of England in the sense of our criticism, and must become the Church of England in the holy and

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beneficent sense in which she never has been the nation's Church. But her task is complicated by her own arrested development. She offers herself as an alternative to the Church of Rome, but she cannot claim to have embodied that spirit of reforming development which was the hope of Catholicism before the clumsy catastrophe of the "Reformation" set the feet of Europe upon the wrong road. It has been her misfortune to oppose and stultify some of the best hopes born in those days.

For example, she never made Catholicism constitutional. If it was indeed Catholicism which the Elizabethan Settlement attempted to preserve, it was erected upon a new basis quite as offensive to the spirit of religion as the old one. The movement toward constitutionalism was forced out of Catholicism as surely by the English State as by the Roman Curia; and it is no marvel that it was captured by the theology of Geneva which promised strength and success, though there had long been a democratic desire in Catholicism which had nothing to do either with Luther or Calvin. The practical English mind was far more stirred by the behaviour of actual flesh-and-blood bishops than by any theories against episcopacy, and the character of the episcopate in the generation after the Settlement is obviously connected with the bald Erastianism of the Church of England. The Presbyterians and the Independents regarded her as a pallid copy of Rome, fortified by the irresponsible might of the secular government; and in the conditions of the Settlement the challenge to episcopacy was bound to come and was almost

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certain to be wrongly formulated. Only after centuries of struggle, disappointment and bitterness, the Church of England is awakening to her need of religious constitutionalism, whilst the Independents are finding their need of some such cohesion as the episcopate gives.

Having separated herself from the democratic movement within the Church and forced that movement into sectarian isolation, she had to suffer all the shocks and endure all the farcical situations in which her secular bondage involved her during the seventeenth century. After what happened in 1662, she naturally passed through the eighteenth century riding to hounds, drinking port and illustrating what has been called the appalling atheism of Jane Austen; and when John Wesley arose and set fire to England, she turned him out, not because of any interest in the high sanctity of order, but because of her strong dislike of religion.

The *New History of Methodism* has traced one source of the Methodist revival in the High Churchmanship of Laud,¹ and has recalled the fact that Methodism was not well received by contemporary nonconformity.² It is a sad fact that this renewal of mystical religion in England was pushed into a sectarian position which has gravely distorted the real genius of Methodism and has by no means been counterbalanced by the rapid rise of respectability in the Methodist bodies. Methodism may be traceable in some part to Laud; but no casual observer would now suspect it. What it might have done,

¹ *New History of Methodism*, vol. i. p. 37.

² *Op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 326.

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what developments it might have inaugurated within the Church of England, it is impossible now to estimate.

Amidst the jumble of sectarian accidentals at the close of the nineteenth century, the average Methodist would have supposed himself to be more nearly akin to Charles Haddon Spurgeon than to Frederick William Faber, whereas by historic theological descent and by obvious psychological affinity there can be no doubt that, if he was a Methodist in more than name, his opinion would have been entirely wrong. But it was not altogether his fault if he did not know his true name. Whatever confusion, crudeness and sectarian spite may have existed amongst the English denominations may not unfairly be traced to the fact that the Church of England came into her present state of existence in a condition of arrested development from which she has never been completely delivered.

She has known great moments, and has given spiritual birth to many holy men ; but not even the Oxford Movement and its later amplifications have availed to lift her back to the highway of a living, moving Catholicism. Scholarship, indeed, has been able to show that several practices and doctrines once supposed to be of late origin in a corrupted Church belong in truth to primitive Christianity, and the restoration of such customs and teaching has helped to create a false impression that the Church of England was making development. Upon the fundamental theory of her Catholic claim, however, she was not actually growing. Catholicism, in her opinion, finished growing ages ago, and she

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herself was only recovering flesh after a long and wasting sickness.

This has been brought out very clearly in the recent Benediction controversy. The bishops unanimously prohibited the service known as the Benediction of the Holy Sacrament, which certain Anglican priests claimed to have found devotionally helpful to their people; and for a time there was sharp and severe strife. Now, any informed person knows perfectly well that when unanimity is secured amongst Anglican bishops, the point at issue cannot possibly be one of pure theology. Indeed, it would be very difficult for any bishop who tolerates the reservation of the Sacrament as practised in many English churches to make out a valid case against Benediction upon theological grounds. It does not seem to put a greater strain upon Article XXVIII than the practice of praying before the consecrated species. But it is admittedly a recent Roman innovation. It is a modern devotional development originating within the Roman communion. Bishops declare that recent foreign innovations cannot be allowed to be introduced into the English Church. They are still where Bishop Jewel believed himself to stand. They say nothing about the Society of Christian Endeavour, which is a recent American innovation, but which, coming from Protestant sources, does not touch the Anglican pride. A Roman development, however, no matter how innocent, reverent and beautiful, cannot be admitted, for the simple reason that it would undermine the whole Anglican apologetic as against the Holy See. For the official Anglican philosophy regards the

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Church as a product finished in the days of the Fathers; badly spoiled in later times; restored in England in the days of good Queen Bess and largely by her sympathetic interest; and a little better understood now than formerly, thanks to the activities of a few young men in Oxford nearly ninety years ago.

In her communion there are men of more than one school of thought who are galled and grieved by this woodenness. But until the Church of England as a whole has sufficient courage to face plain facts about both England and the Church, and at least sometimes to see herself as others see her, she will hardly approach with more success than Rome the task of seizing the wonderful religious opportunity now opening up after the long period of disintegration and analysis.

She has occupied what she herself has believed to be a privileged position in this country for more than three hundred and fifty years, and the people of England in the mass are to-day about as well-informed concerning the truths of the Christian religion as were the subjects of King Penda in Mercia. The appalling revelations of the religious condition of the manhood of England, now made public in a remarkable volume,¹ based upon systematic inquiry during the war, ought to provoke her to a temper of holy revolution. As some of her wisest members are now pointing out, if a State medical service had proved itself as inefficient to make the nation healthy as a State religious service has proved itself to make the nation Christian, there

¹ *The Army and Religion* (Macmillan, 1919),

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would be a riot. The Church of England, unless she speedily achieves great changes, may dread the day when the man in the street becomes as interested in his soul as he now is in his body.

Meanwhile it is public knowledge that her own internal condition is one of such rich variety as sometimes to present an appearance akin to confusion. She includes Protestants, Catholics, Literalists and Liberals. While one of her bishops can explain that he would like to see the word "priest" deleted from the Christian vocabulary, others refuse upon principles of rigid sacerdotalism to admit any validity in Free Church orders, adopting a gesture curiously similar to that of the Roman officials in denying any validity in Anglican orders. She includes some who are quite content with the Establishment as traditionally interpreted: others who wish to see it drastically revised; and others, again, who would welcome its total repudiation. From time to time she endures spasms of self-consciousness concerning her relations with nonconformists, but as soon as the question is raised the air is filled with the cries, and the newspapers with the letters, of her warring factions, so that any real advance seems sometimes hopeless.

If this boasted inclusiveness were based upon some vital and clearly conceived religious principle, if it were a genuine living complex and synthesis, it would have produced a very different state of affairs both in Church and nation from that which now exists. At any rate, we should not be troubled by a national Church which is supported by the minority of Englishmen and governed ultimately by everybody.

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The inclusiveness is one of tangle and chaos ; it embraces at once too much and too little ; because the Church was based upon a secular policy now obsolete, to the exclusion of certain elements of Catholicism which have survived. These considerations are here set down neither in malice, in jealousy, nor in any spirit of sectarian rivalry. Thousands of Free Churchmen to-day desire nothing but blessings for the Church of England, and some are by temperament and philosophy more appreciative of militant Anglo-Catholicism than are certain sorts of Established Protestants. (It is indeed probable that the writings of Father Figgis have had as great an influence upon the younger generation of Free Church ministers as upon any other section of the community.)

In recent years there has sprung up between Anglicans and Free Churchmen of the rank and file a free-trade in ideas, far more vigorous than any official recognition has yet indicated. Free Churchmen are increasingly dissatisfied with sectarian division, and large numbers of them would willingly make sacrifices for the sake of reunion. But the Establishment has been one great stumbling-block ; and another is that in uniting with the Church of England they would have no clear notion of what they were doing, because there is now available no authoritative definition of what the Church of England is supposed to be. It must be understood, too, that a generation of Free Churchmen is now arising which is no more attracted by Bishop Henson's form of inclusiveness than by Bishop Gore's form of exclusiveness, but prefers either of them to the Protestant

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Truth Society. We are no more delighted at being assured that the Church of England is faithful to "Protestant standards" than we are when informed that her conception of priesthood and sacraments is really not different from that of Rome. We do not propose to hark back to those outmoded controversies. We want to hear about the Catholicism of the coming century, and how the Church of England proposes to incorporate the witness and gifts which the Free Churches have to bring. What is her approach to that Holy Catholic Church which at length must lift every fragment of Christendom into a new, organic union? We Free Churchmen do not claim that our particular denominational modes must be regulative: we have some sense of proportion, and we shall be satisfied if the Free Churches are accepted as contributory. But how shall the Church of England be changed from a *via media* which has left out two important extremes, into a synthesis which shall provide a place for both? How shall she hold out the right hand of fellowship to the Free Churches, and yet not finally turn her back upon the historic tradition?

It may yet prove that to her is allotted in the designs of Providence a great part in the redemption of the whole Church of God. It may be that out of her very failings and misfortunes she will learn the secrets of healing. The present position is certainly full of possibilities, whose nature will be more fully explored in the next chapter; but it does look as if the Church of England, to human eyes by blind stumbling and lucky accident, but doubtless in reality by the guidance of God who brings dreams of salva-

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tion out of Babylonian exiles, has come face to face with one of the critical opportunities of religious history ; for accompanied by her problems in the forms of Presbyterianism, Congregationalism and Methodism, she has stepped side by side with the British race as it has wandered across the world.

Now, since the collapse of the Roman Empire, no essentially new type of world-government has been founded (for the temporal Cæsarism of the Papacy was but an interlude). The modern nations arising from that vast wreckage pursued the pathway of self-determination by imperial expansion, or aimed at a self-sufficient and exclusive nationalism which simply evacuated the whole field of world-politics. But already we see the exhaustion of both forms of nationalism as sufficient vehicles of social life. The most isolated communities find themselves swept up in new currents of world-interest, whilst idealists everywhere are craving for some international synthesis. It is certain, however, that such a development must come by co-operation. It will never again be found, even temporarily, by the method of one dominant Power drawing or forcing others into its orbit. The fall of German imperialism will at length reverberate in the dullest jingo brains from Washington to Tokio.

Meanwhile, Britain, the successful competitor for modern dominion, has discovered that an empire can no longer be an empire at all. She may still preserve a little imperial swagger in Ireland or Egypt ; but there is a new phrase in existence which registers a new temper and outlook. We have been taught to speak of the British Commonwealth of

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Nations ; and we are learning to see here the true nature of the contribution which we have to make to the future ordering of human society. The question which concerns us at the moment is whether the Church of England¹ can boldly advance beyond the Cæsarism of Rome and the national monarchist conceptions of Tudor England, and by a drastic reform of theory show that she is fit to lead the world into the new age of democracy and co-operation. She is the privileged Church of the nation and the Church of prestige throughout the whole British Commonwealth of Nations. Upon every hand she is attended by Churches which can bring to her the elements she lacks for the task now confronting her ; and she has the opportunity of leading the construction of a new Catholicism which shall at length confront even the ancient majesty of Rome upon equal terms. Thanks to the Oxford Movement she has begun to interpret herself in the Catholic sense. She is in touch with Eastern Catholicism. But she is in daily proximity to the forces of religious freedom. These facts define her task.

This will involve several searching changes. It is obvious that if she is to live at all, there must be a still further restatement of her secular connections. She professes to stand for a federal conception of Catholicism which she believes to have been anterior to the Roman autocracy and broken by unfair means. But she is not at present free to put any such belief into effective practice without the consent of the secular government. In order to bring in the federation of mankind, however, she must break

¹ Cf. Temple, *Mens Creatrix*, chapters xviii and xxiv.

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loose from the narrow trammels of a national policy now antiquated and impossible. If she refuses the touchstone of being in communion with the Bishop of Rome, she must also refuse the touchstone of being in communion with the Privy Council: specially since the Privy Council no longer cares two straws about being in communion with her.

She must, again, cultivate democracy in her own constitution, not indeed with the object of trimming her policy to suit the fashions of the hour, but perceiving that the Christian ethic has been a mighty leaven in the world and that the Church cannot afford to represent in her own constitution an outgrown ethical conception of human relationship. This is only to say that she must now recover and synthesize those forces of Catholic reform which were so rudely dispersed, disorganized and distorted in the upheaval of the Reformation. Undoubtedly this will involve a re-interpretation of episcopacy, priesthood and sacraments; but it will not necessarily involve a denial of either. Many Anglican priests of Catholic belief and temper, having come into full and unrestrained contact with the modern movement, are now holding the representative doctrine of priesthood. This conception may be better discussed in the next chapter; but it seems the most hopeful Anglican line of approach to the problem of British sectarianism. And it suggests a way of outflanking the otherwise apparently impregnable Roman position. When Rome sees the rest of Christendom united in positive affirmations which carry the historic tradition into new spheres of significance, even she must begin to believe in a Church greater than herself, because

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greater than all Churches. There seems, at all events, no other way of consolidating the dispersive Christianity which has sprung up from the various national "reformations." Certainly the end will be compassed by no vague resolutions to be affable, nor by any mere mechanical formula which will leave the sects just where and what they are at present.

Finally, the Church of England must proclaim at length the unsophisticated social implications of the Gospel, lifting a beacon of warning and hope to a world distraught, quarrelsome and as yet uncured of worldly greed. She must do it in England, or perish. In the minds of tens of thousands of Englishmen she stands identified with that soporific cruelty of respectability which has blighted our brotherhood and estranged the common crowds from the love of Jesus. Mainly as the result of the evil which fell upon her under Elizabeth, she stands a suspect amongst the English people clamouring for their birthright.¹ Let her stand up in a new day, having the wisdom to bring forth from her treasure things new and old. Let her stand up now as the strong champion of one kingdom only, whose king is Christ. Let her reveal herself as England redeemed, the nation renewed in love.

¹ This is not intended to deny that in recent years the Church of England has manifested an increasing concern for social justice. During the past half-century she has produced passionate prophets of social righteousness; and has even officially rebuked the wrongs of the present system. But although these efforts suffer under the limitations which cripple her best endeavours, it must be admitted that the Free Churches do not greatly, if at all, surpass her in social idealism.

Ecclesia Anglicana

Multitudes of Free Churchmen are waiting to accord her a strong and tender affection. Young men are looking with passionate eagerness beyond the effete barriers of denominationalism, waiting to behold the Church of the firstborn. We confess to no mean spirit of bargaining, but only to the desire to bring into the household of our Mother the gifts which we know to be priceless. We, at any rate, believe that we have seen visions. And in those visions there stood the angel of the Church of England, calling us to come and offer with her a holy Eucharist : to offer ourselves with her, a reasonable sacrifice for the sake of that greater Church which is yet to be, the glowing heart of the world made one in Christ.

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THE search for a living Catholicism which shall be true to the central historic tradition, and yet exclude no element of demonstrated Christian value, is now being carried on by men and women in various denominations, and even by some who are at present in no communion at all. It is the chief characteristic of the newly awakening religious life of this moment, and it seems certain at length to produce new and surprising co-ordinations. At present, however, it is for the most part only vaguely directed, a yearning of heart without adequate conceptual articulation. The tangle of historical problems baffles it. The mass of common prejudice which is neither conservative nor indicative of any deep religious feeling, but simply sleepy and cross, is diminishing; but it is still mountainous and heavy. We must not assume that the absence of strong and active opposition is a healthy sign. The opposition of a few professional fanatics proves little one way or another; but the violent objections of the ordinary church-goer would at least prove that the ordinary church-goer was interested in the future of the Church, even though identifying the Church with his own sect.

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It is significant that up to the present the Church of Rome has singularly failed to gain from the returning Catholic consciousness of the times. Some who are accused of too great a readiness to learn from her are showing no disposition to submit to her. They, indeed, confess to having discovered a sincere appreciation of the Roman Church, not in her assumed rôle of the one and only Church, but rather as giving expression to certain truths and principles which, they feel, ought to be disengaged from an inadequate setting in order to become regulative in the greater Catholicism. Some time ago a Roman Catholic writer made the discovery that Free Churchmen are more religious than Anglicans, and suggested in *The Catholic Times* that instead of wasting energy upon the Church of England, Roman propagandists should direct their missionary zeal to the more promising fields of nonconformity, whose younger ministers were supposed to be only waiting for the invitation to cross over.

The directors of Roman activities will probably know better than to throw away their labour in this fashion. Upon the other hand there does not seem much likelihood that the Church of England, as she stands, will prove too alluring to Free Churchmen who have felt the secret impulse of the time. We hear of Free Church ministers being received, year by year, into the national Church; but the fact is that as the insurgent desire achieves clearer expression, it is less disposed to seek satisfaction in the forsaking of one communion for another. There may, of course, be sound reasons for changing communion, but the modern quest of Catholicism does not specially

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dictate such a course. There is no existing Church able to meet its demands, although it is seen that all communions comprise some values not entirely negligible.

Amongst many outward, visible signs of the increase of inward, spiritual grace, the Free Catholic Movement asks to be included. It may seem at first sight no small impertinence to conclude this rough survey of the present situation with an account of a movement, still comparatively small, which has not yet attracted many of the representative leaders of religion in this country. It may be replied, however, that no new religious uprising has ever been initiated by representative religious leaders ; and, in any case, a movement is to be estimated largely by its aims and ideas. The Free Catholic Movement may justly claim to be in good company. It desires to express the main religious tendencies of this period, even though, as one of its spokesmen has suggested, its very emergence may have temporarily arrested those tendencies by forcing further reflection upon many who were perhaps somewhat aimlessly well-disposed. At any rate, the discussion of the origin and growth of this movement will serve to elucidate more definitely some of the positive demands likely to be made upon the whole Church of Christ from now onwards.

The Society of Free Catholics had its origin a few years ago in a small fellowship of ministers who were accustomed to go into periodical retreat and by prayer and meditation to seek to know and to do the will of God. It may seem strange that these men were nearly all ministers of Free, or non-sub-

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scribing Churches, and had usually been classified as Unitarians. Some considerations will presently be offered which may possibly mitigate the sense of surprise that there should have sprung from liberal sources a propaganda which has been likened to the Oxford Movement, and some of whose leaders have even been said to bear at least a distant resemblance to the central figures of the great Anglican regeneration. It is, however, probably true to say that at the outset the fellowship was drawn together by devotional impulse, by a craving for richer inward life, rather than by any thought of making progress in the direction of orthodoxy. Yet there was present at the same time the desire to appropriate as largely as possible the devotional life of the historic Church, and to find spiritual integration, if that could be attained, in the piety of Catholic tradition. What developments have ensued from the earnest pursuit of that purpose will presently be indicated.

The leadership of this group fell to a personality of considerable force whose courage and energy were united with gifts of far vision and great practical statesmanship. The Rev. J. M. Lloyd Thomas gave the first shape and impetus to the movement whose growth we are now recording ; but he would be the first to admit that the subsequent progress of his thought and the co-operation of the growing Society have both modified and expanded the preliminary expression of Free Catholic idea. These are signs of a perfectly natural and healthy growth. It must be remembered that the movement soon began to attract the attention of ministers and laymen of several denominations who were approaching either

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freedom or Catholicism from various starting points. A germinative idea was already producing fruit in unexpected places, while the publication of the monthly magazine, *The Free Catholic*, brought an ever greater variety of interest to bear upon the fundamental conception.

The Society received a great accession of strength when it was joined by Dr. W. E. Orchard, who speedily infused into its proceedings his apostolic fervour and brought to its deliberations both spiritual genius and theological skill. It may be added that he also blessed discussions of ecclesiastical problems with a fountain of riotous humour. To Mr. Lloyd Thomas and to Dr. Orchard the movement is most indebted for its present position, though assistance has come from many, and not least from members of the Church of England. Two conferences have been held, the first (in January 1918) really establishing the movement upon a definite basis, and the second (in Whit-week 1919) discussing in some detail the Free Catholic conception of the Church.¹ Both conferences have been successful in showing the wide interest already awakened by the very small amount of propaganda work so far performed.

The membership grows steadily; and "if not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble" have so far been called, the Society can boast a respectable mentality, while its chief claim upon public interest is that it has united Catholics, Evangelicals and Modernists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congrega-

¹ A Questionary on the Conception of the Church had been submitted to all members. The replies were summarized by the Rev. A. J. Sinclair-Burton (Church of England).

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tionalists, Methodists and others, not in a mere quest, and not merely upon a basis of mutual toleration, or even of mutual admiration, but in a body of positive affirmations, which seem as time goes by to be capable of bearing severe scrutiny. Its conferences have been attended and addressed by well-known Anglican priests, and its ideals have won the spoken approval of Anglican dignitaries. Free Churchmen and Anglicans have learned within its borders to work for a common end ; and even Roman Catholics have come with unfeigned interest.¹ But prominent in the Society's membership are social idealists, and the most exhilarating session of the first conference was that which listened to the passionate pleas for the social witness of the Church put forward by Dr. Stanley Mellor and the Rev. Stanley Russell.

The immediate activities occupying the attention of the Executive Council are, besides the promulgation of Free Catholic ideas, the cultivation of spiritual life by means of retreats and the ordering of private devotion ; the more systematic examination of the crucial issues of reunion ; and the presentation of the Free Catholic position as regards the great questions in dispute. Meanwhile the movement continues with success to bring together members of widely separated communions and to propound an equal insistence upon the values of historic Catholicism and the reformative and restorative functions of

¹ Roman Catholics have contributed to *The Free Catholic* (e.g. Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P., and Miss Petre). Roman priests and laymen subscribe as readers to the magazine. The Society's membership is of course open to Roman Catholics as to all Christians who can accept the *Basis*.

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soundly conceived freedom.¹ The precise connotation given to these terms will presently appear.

Now, it is not to be wondered at, by those actually acquainted with the contemporary religious and intellectual situation, that such a movement had its origin in the extreme Free Church wing. It is true that this origin has caused some suspicion amongst orthodox Catholics; but such suspicions are quite unnecessary, and many good Catholics are now included in the Society's membership. Moreover, suspicions concerning the origins of the movement are at least counterbalanced by the fears of others as to its destiny. While some people appear to think that the theological groundwork of the movement is the bare assertion that God is one (and perhaps minus one rather than plus one), others profess grave forebodings, lest it should proceed to bring back the Holy Inquisition. This alarm also is quite gratuitous.

The very definite affirmations and the whole tendency of the Society indicate a genuine attempt to unite all shades of intellectual expression which can honestly be related to the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Master and Lord of the soul and of society. For some of its adherents, connection with Free Catholicism has signified a growing attachment to the historic credal formularies; but they claim no more than freedom to express the dogmatic and unanalysed deliverances of the heart in what to them seems the best conceptual mode. It is not believed that unity is to be secured by rigid logical definition

¹ Full particulars of the Society may be obtained from the Rev. J. S. Burgess, Flowery Field, Hyde, Cheshire.

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of doctrine. Such Liberalism as the Society avows is therefore not to be mistaken for identification with a particular doctrinal attitude, but is rather a religious temper which, while requiring the utter and final loyalty of the concrete personality to Christ, and retaining high respect for the creeds of the Church, does not seek to impose those creeds as being in every detail the only possible articulation of true faith.

The factor of origin is, indeed, of immense value in the intellectual substructure of the movement, for it disposes in advance of the criticism that we are sentimentalists suffering from a weakness for ecclesiastical millinery. It may be said with complete sincerity that those who have won to this position after patient and persistent inquiry, have come, not because they were exhausted, but because, having still some life left in them, they had discovered that so many things certainly were exhausted. They do not feel at all as if they are drowning men clutching at a straw. For the first time in their lives they do feel like fighting men grasping a flag. They have deserted confusion for the hope of order, because they are alive. It must be recalled that they had seen some significant happenings.

They had seen the Jesus of history divested of supernatural authority and of any clear historic outline, and the attempt to restore supernatural religion by means of the Christ-myth; and before it was too late they perceived that this was the reduction of subjectivity to its remotest extremity and the promise of chaos. It left every man in a vacuum with his own private Saviour. There could

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no longer be any objective standard of the Christian Faith or the Christian ethic: and whether an objective standard be a spiritual necessity or not it is a demonstrated psychological necessity. They found themselves therefore reduced to two alternatives. They must abandon religion as the vital mode of constructing society upon invisible sanctions; or they must look for such a conception of the supernatural as would warrant belief in the probability of its finding expression upon the plane of ordinary historic objectivity. For some, Pragmatism and various presentations of value-philosophy were at this time helpful, and led the way back to a new appreciation of the traditional Christian Faith and to the Church as having indisputably guarded that Faith. Moreover, such Church-consciousness as had been most loyal both to the historic objectivity and to the supernatural character of the Christian religion became for them now the most valid and trustworthy. They therefore began with more boldness to use the name of Catholic, not in the intentionally loose sense in which they might earlier have employed it, but with a far more solid and definite meaning.

They had perceived, too, that the developments of merely negative Liberalism were destructive of the Church-idea. If Jesus was no more than the finest spiritual product of the human race up to the present time, it was not in principle less absurd to found a Church in His name than in the name of any one else. Still, a human name may provide some sort of rallying-point, may at least become a party catchword and badge, though the process which seemed to be deleting all definite colour and form from the historical

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Jesus would at length have demolished the Church. You may bring men together to study the works of Shakespeare, even when they are firmly convinced that they are the works of Bacon ; but the authority of the Christian revelation evaporates as soon as its origins grow doubtful. We are not at this point discussing Christian apologetics : we are recording observed events.

The attempt to replace the supernatural authority of Jesus by the Christ-myth was the last possible issue of sectarianism. Put forward with the hope of ending the long squabbles of the centuries, and as the discovery of the real religion of all decent people, by the recognition of which Mohammedans, Jews, Buddhists and Agnostics could at length join hands with Primitive Methodists and the Salvation Army, it really brought up the number of sects to the exact total of the world's population. For, in the last analysis, there were as many sects as men, and no Church had more than one adherent. By this time it began to look as though the historic Church knew far more about saving herself than some of her would-be rescuers. Should it be objected that those who for such reasons sought to unite themselves with the Catholic tradition were the worst of all subjectivists, measuring facts by hasty judgements founded upon personal tastes, it may be pointed out that the whole swing of philosophy, theology and historical criticism was in the direction they were taking. And discrimination was exercised. For while the Free Catholic Movement accepts the fundamental *dogmatic testimony* of Catholicism (using this term in the sense of the spontaneous assertions of the

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heart) as persisting in the historic tradition unchanged beneath all developments of articulation, it does not bind its members to regard the classic credal formularies as essentially beyond improvement—nor does it hinder any person from so regarding them. Some of its members do so regard them, and some do not. The door is left open to reverent re-interpretation which shall be entirely faithful to the full Christian experience, but nobody is required to pass through that door unless he wishes. We have this confidence. “Religion,” says Dr. Orchard, “has come to us upon the flood-tide.”

The movement toward historic Catholicism was strengthened by the perception of the ill condition of denominational Christianity. In the first place, it was clear that the old sectarian boundaries no longer corresponded to the dominant realities of the situation. There was more in common between Anglican and Free Church liberals, and between Anglican and Free Church evangelicals than between the liberals and evangelicals in any one denomination. The fact is that although the various sects may have come into existence to preserve particular elements of Christian truth endangered at the time of their birth, those precious elements now bid fair to be lost for ever if they remain in isolation. The classic instance is found, of course, in Rome herself, in which the centralizing of power in the Papacy was meant to safeguard the cohesion of Christendom—precisely the one thing which it is now preventing, for it is mainly responsible for the distinction which Rome herself is compelled to draw between Christendom and the Catholic Church. But the same self-

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stultification appears everywhere in the history of sects. The vital elements of Catholic faith and order cannot flourish in isolation. Methodism is in danger of becoming anything but mystical and zealous. Congregationalism is now assuming a greater co-ordination, not only as a corrective to anarchy and a deliverance from tyranny, but as a necessity for self-preservation.

Moreover, the denominations are totally unfit to be the vehicles of the Christian Faith to the modern world. From time to time attempts are made to unite them in social service, while leaving the fact of their spiritual divisions untouched. It is argued that at least they can agree upon the need for Christianizing society. Doubtless they can ; and one would be sorry to disparage any attempt to bring the followers of Christ together in any worthy service. But how can they quite avoid the suggestion of hypocrisy, in setting out to Christianize social ethics ? The salvation of society means the correlation of the aims of men in Christ ; but until the Churches are unified in Christ, they afford a poor illustration of the power of their own gospel, and constitute a real stumbling-block to the feet of the multitudes.

It was felt, too, that if the Church is to exist at all she must express Christianity not as a confused series of mutually exclusive "special witnesses," but as a positive and organic body of objective truth : that she must represent the common result of the impact of Christ upon the common soul. With the weakening of denominational life and with the growth of the spirit of toleration there had been a

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considerable interchange of thought, and the same winds had been blowing across many vineyards ; so that at length out of the extremities of Free Church life and from men who had most ardently explored the possibilities of religious individualism, there arose a cry for the Holy Catholic Church. They found it answered by men who were utterly faithful to Catholicism, but were hungering and thirsting for freedom.

Such intellectual and spiritual progress, though modified by personal temperament and religious starting point, has been common amongst intelligent Christian men in recent years. The distinctiveness of the Free Catholic movement is not in its consciousness of needs, but in its positive answers to them. Its philosophy of denominationalism is not destructive, and its philosophy of reunion attempts more than any sort of federation which would leave the denominations exactly where and what they are. It addresses itself to the psychological fissures which division has produced ; but it does not propose any humiliating submissions. And it may be added that it certainly does not desire or intend to allow itself to issue in a new sect. Such a result would be the contradiction of its root principles. It inculcates loyalty to denominations in a Catholic spirit, and the only new Church which Free Catholics would welcome must be the Church Universal.

It asserts, then, that for their own sake, as well as for the sake of Christianity, the various sections must proceed to incorporate their special witnesses in the whole life of historic Christendom. Nor is this to be regarded as a forced and unnatural pro-

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ceeding, or a counsel of despair; for, says Mr. Lloyd Thomas,

The main roots of every Christian Church pass through the rich soil of all the centuries of European history and draw sap and sustenance from the entire Catholic heritage of Christendom. This general life belongs to every congregation—Roman, Eastern, Anglican, or Free Church. Every single congregation that is broadly and deeply based on history and is livingly dependent on Christ as its head shares in the religious commonwealth of the entire Catholic Church.¹

The particular view of history involved in this conception is not that of most school books, and therefore meets with some incredulity; but it is largely supported by the general tendency of modern historical research which seems to warrant us in regarding the upheaval known as the Protestant Reformation, not as the deliverance of the pure Gospel from the distortions and corruptions of Rome in such a manner that the pure Gospel has since lived on in Protestantism, while the corruptions have continued to flourish in Rome, but rather as a false cleavage and dispersion of values very largely due to political causes. This does not mean that there were not shameful abuses in later mediæval Catholicism, or that there was no such person as Martin Luther. It means that when division came, the life of the Church was broken along wrong lines. It left some honourable and, indeed, vital elements still cohering with the old abuses; and it left the forces

¹ "The Catholic Tradition and Outlook of the Old Meeting Church." Sermon by Rev. J. M. Lloyd Thomas (Cornish Brothers, Birmingham, 1918).

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of reform and the impulse toward evangelical reality weakened by unnatural isolation and a prey to a host of new abuses.

If it was an enemy who first sowed the tares, they were not obedient servants who pulled up wheat as well as tares. Upon the Roman view Protestantism was all tares. Upon the Protestant view Romanism was all tares. Upon either view the fact has to be faced that the remaining wheat looks a little sickly and mildewed. And the same principle may be applied to the different circumstances of the ancient schism between East and West. The Free Catholic view, therefore, does not allow to any of the present divisions of Christendom the right to be regarded as the whole Church, or as a satisfactory example which the whole Church must observe, though it is prepared to allow a regulative function to those Churches which have undeniably preserved a larger measure of Catholic consciousness and a keener appreciation of the importance of continuity, at least in so far as the forms in which these values are expressed do not demonstrably impair the spiritual realities which they are supposed to preserve. But Free Catholicism holds that those Churches must seek to restore certain elements which have been subtracted from the unity of Catholicism and banished into schism, whilst the Churches which have ceased to make any effective use of the name "Catholic" must complete their partial witness by exploring the gifts and graces of traditional Catholicism.

When this is explained to some English Free Churchmen, and its immediate practical consequences begin to be perceived, they are apt to grow alarmed.

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They are not passionately concerned to defend a particular denomination as the only gate of God's city. They are, indeed, usually willing to regard their denominations as limbs of the Body of Christ ; but they cannot accustom themselves to the apparently simple thought that a limb is meant to be joined to a body, and that the join must be made in only one place. Yet if the Free Churches of England are real Churches, the devotion and order of the "Catholic" Churches cannot be entirely alien and unimportant for them, or utterly impossible for them to appropriate.

Before any true organic reunion can be brought about, however, it seems necessary that sectarian modes of thought and life must submit to at least some degree of modification, or rather of incorporation into larger modes. The first problem is not that of outward, mechanical, and official unification, but the cultivation, within each section, of the whole Catholic life. A great deal of time seems to be wasted upon the question of the relation between the Church of England and the Free Churches. Bishops continue to thunder against each other upon the proposal for the interchange of pulpits ; but the best purpose likely to be served by such an arrangement appears to be that it would intensify to the point of nausea the consciousness of divisions still unbridged. It would force the numerous sections of Christendom in England upon each other's notice. The reception of each other's preachers would create a generous envy or a pitiful sympathy—as the case might be ; but it would be no positive step toward reunion.

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Free Catholicism is not anxious to precipitate formal reunion. It rather desiderates an adequate basis for reunion in a living synthesis of faith and order to which all the Churches may at least approximate before they seek to express their new-found Catholicism in the outward bonds of corporate connection. Such variety as then remains may find expression in denominational orders and guilds, which shall yet be regarded as within and not without the Church, and whose characteristic marks shall not violently contradict the main established features of Church-life, but supplement them according to particular needs, or give them such special presentation as has been proved to be spiritually effective. The varieties of religious orders, and even of eucharistic rites, tolerated within historic Catholicism, are sufficient to exclude the assumption that the ideal must be rigid uniformity. Catholicism can maintain far richer variety than it has ever yet attempted.

We point to Catholicism, meaning the historic tradition as it has preserved the Catholic consciousness and title, as the true ground of reunion, simply because Protestantism has shown no power to correct the fissiparous tendencies which appeared at its birth. Since its origin, Protestantism has been largely employed in protesting against Protestants. We have had no great measures of reunion, excepting those between Churches whose separation has never been more than a domestic difference of opinion. The attempt even to federate the Free Churches appears to have collapsed; and any organic union of Anglicans and Nonconformists seems still a

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promise of prophetic vision rather than a proposition of practical politics. The consequence seems to be that until the sects learn to adopt the Catholic outlook and its appropriate results in faith and order, they must continue to exist with declining vitality, isolated and apart.

It may be remarked that there are divisions amongst Churches which do, in fact, cleave to the title and preserve the ethos of Catholicism : that at least one such division, and a great one, is of longer standing than any of the Protestant divisions, and that it has proved at least as incapable of being healed. But the Catholic Churches have preserved the *doctrine* of the Church's visible unity. They have consistently and even spitefully assailed those whom they consider responsible for the breach of unity. The Eastern Orthodox Church would not seriously discuss the reunion of Christendom without thinking of the Church of Rome ; but a Free Churchman can write a whole book about the Church's divisions and never mention Rome. The fact is that Protestantism has not securely held the conception of Christianity as fundamentally organic. Even now it is possible for some Protestants to assail those who desire reunion with fine ecclesiastical scorn. Until lately Free Churchmen have not spoken of the subject ; and at present timid and tentative proposals toward *rapprochement* are often defended rather upon grounds of practical expediency than upon the nature of Christ's gospel. It is high time that Free Churchmen began to understand that whatever may be the state of practical politics, the perpetuation of division is a procedure both psycho-

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logically and spiritually unsound: and that the mere reciprocal recognition of each other's existence upon the part of the various sections is no sufficient medicine for our malady.

It must be made plain that we do not desiderate submission to Rome, or even the adoption of what claim to be Catholic standards precisely as they at present exist. What is required is the appropriation of those standards so far as may be found possible in loyalty to the fundamental Free Church principles (when they are disentangled from Free Church prejudices). And likewise we wish to see those Churches which claim to be "Catholic" exploring the principles of freedom and establishing their Catholicism thereon.

It is not surprising that the bare proposal to synthesize Catholicism and Freedom should have to meet at the outset with strong criticism from the side of traditionalism, for it is obviously open to easy misunderstanding. There are some who appear to suppose that the whole movement is run by faddists and cranks who have invented a hotch-potch of their own and have irreverently labelled it with a name to which they have no sort of right. One has even heard it asserted that Free Catholicism seeks to include Mohammedans and Jews! And there has been considerable suspicion that the Society of Free Catholics is "unsound" upon Christology and the essentially supernatural origin and character of Christianity. Of course, in a day of religious freaks, anything may be expected to happen; but the Catholicism here intended is no invention of a few restless imaginations.

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In fact, the name of Catholicism is held, in spite of the forebodings and dismal fears which it engenders in some Protestant breasts, because it is the true description of the thing we love and desire. It is meant to connote no confused and wildly variegated inclusiveness, but a historic body and system of truth and prayer: Catholicism as a distinctive attitude to life and a recognizable religious disposition. Another name might more swiftly have captured the evanescent loyalty of the modern mind¹; but the Society has preferred to be less immediately popular because it wished to be quite serious. Yet it claims that freedom is necessary in order to bring historic Catholicism to a greater self-consistency than it possesses in any existing communion, and to provide it with a more faithful articulation of its own genius.

The second article of the *Basis*² declares that there shall be an endeavour to combine Christian Faith with freedom of thought; but it must not be forgotten that the first article binds all signatories to "absolute moral and spiritual loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God," to "faith in Christ as God's supreme gift for the salvation of the world," and to a solemn resolution "by divine grace to abide in this faith." Thus, whatever freedom of thought be inculcated, it can take place only upon the accepted fact of the salvation of God in Christ; and this surely is as legitimate as freedom of thought upon the accepted data of sense-experience. We have learned from actual instances that when freedom

¹ See Orchard, "Catholicism's Past," *Free Catholic*, October 1919.

² The *Basis* is published in every issue of *The Free Catholic*.

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conceives itself naturally based upon negations, it is already dead. A man is not free to discuss the objective universe if he has denied its existence. The published writings of representative Free Catholics make it perfectly clear that the movement is not overweighted upon the side of critical Liberalism. Dr. Orchard's book, *The Necessity of Christ*¹ and his volume of sermons, *The New Catholicism*,² together with Mr. Lloyd Thomas's published sermon, *Why Christ is God*,³ ought to reassure the most hesitant upon this point; and members of Catholic churches will find in *Divine Service* the atmosphere they love.⁴ But the position will become clearer as this account proceeds; and, at any rate, the adherence of many whose Catholic orthodoxy has never been in question must at once dispose of the doubt as to the real spiritual loyalties of the movement.

For a genuine test of the application of the principles of Freedom and Catholicity in organic harmony we may now briefly discuss the conceptions of the Church, the Priesthood and the Sacraments which commend themselves from the Free Catholic point of view; and it will be observed that the freedom of the Free Churches is given a positive content, but not contradicted, in that the Church, the Priesthood and the Sacraments are admitted and proclaimed as of profound theological and devotional importance in Christianity; while traditional Catholicism is

¹ *The Necessity of Christ* (Dent, 1916).

² *The New Catholicism* (Allen and Unwin, 1917).

³ *Why Christ is God* (Cornish, 1917).

⁴ *Divine Service*. Compiled by Dr. Orchard (Oxford University Press, 1919).

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developed in that the doctrines of Church, Priesthood and Sacraments are more widely based.

When we declare that we desire traditional Catholicism, and are nevertheless determined to keep our freedom, there is an excellent opening for some critics to deny that we are Catholics and for others to deny that we are free. Such criticism is a little too obvious to be true. We may reach the heart of the matter by asking whether Catholicism is a system now fully explicated and finally closed. There seems to be no consensus of the Church Dispersive upon the point. And we shall ask, further, whether freedom to develop its own implications is a right which Catholicism necessarily abandons merely by being Catholicism.

Now, the theories of the Church as founded upon either Papacy or Episcopate in such a manner that Pope or bishop gives to the Church her reality, and that without one or the other she would cease to be the Body of Christ, losing with Pope or with bishops her essential spiritual identity are, to say the least, difficult to establish as really expressing anything fundamental in the ethical and religious teachings of Christianity. The long-continued history of episcopacy undoubtedly creates strong practical presuppositions in its favour as an effective mode of Church administration; and similarly a claim might be made for some form of Papacy, as against the loose federal form of Catholicism. But that is not to say that the theories of episcopacy constructed by Roman jurists¹ are to be permanently accepted

¹ Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, pp. 278 et seq.

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as registering the Church's consciousness of her real nature.

In truth, they seem rather to preclude her self-articulation as the ideal society. Presumably in her evangelical appeal she invites all men into union with Christ: she claims to maintain them in a spiritual and moral relation with each other which is transcendently based in every believer's heart. The validity of Papacy or Episcopate may be asserted upon the ground of proved efficiency for this purpose; but the purpose itself is to base human society beyond any visible sanctions. The society so founded cannot find its ultimate characterization apart from the conception of equal fellowship in Christ; and therefore a hierarchy which supposes itself to be basal and to rest in the spiritual nature of things, so that without it the very idea of a redeemed society would be precluded, is controverting the spiritual foundation of the Church.

It cannot be regarded as entirely negligible that the hard and fast theory of episcopacy was propounded under the influence of imperial Rome, when the Empire and the Church were already coalescing. The individualism of the Renaissance brought a reaction not only against Papacy and episcopacy, but against the very conception of priesthood; but the forces then released have now worked themselves out, and it seems that their continued isolation can produce no further results of any value. The period has contributed to the deepening of the sense of the worth of the individual; but individual worth can no longer be expressed by individualistic philosophy. The Church was broken

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in the West because her structure did not allow sufficient individual value in the corporate whole: the Papal government was conceived upon the model of imperialism (which is morally perhaps neither better nor worse than the absolute sway of a number of self-sufficient monarchs). But while this age is crying aloud for the restoration of organic and corporate conceptions of society, these must now be presented in the light of democracy. It is not necessarily a rude, unhistorical spirit which demands that the Church's conception of organic salvation should be interpreted as befitting the genius of the Christian Commonwealth. Surely it is to make a great claim for Catholicism, that it can receive into itself even its seeming contradictions, and utilize them for its own richer self-expression.

There is no reason to suppose that this will derogate from the sublimity of the Church's message, or from the supernatural power and awe of her sacraments. It is much more likely that it will renew and fortify her claim upon the loyalty of all men of goodwill; for we are not proposing to accept any individualistic notions of freedom as regulative, and the Church's sacramental system must be given its true place. It is probable that sacramental religion is at present suspected by evangelicals for quite wrong reasons. The average Free Churchman would perhaps be disposed to assert that the most obnoxious features of the Roman Mass are that it is held to be a sacrifice and that it is committed to the theory of transubstantiation. And from the standpoint of purely religious judgement that Free Churchman would be hopelessly wrong.

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The metaphysical theory of transubstantiation may depend upon categories of a philosophy no longer generally accepted ; but there is nothing inherently absurd or superstitious in it. It is, indeed, not half so absurd as some criticisms of it—which are too often comparable to Dr. Johnson's refutation of Bishop Berkeley. As authoritatively defined and taught, the doctrine declares that in the act of consecration the metaphysical substances of bread and wine are replaced by the Body and Blood of Christ. It is not exactly clear what is here meant by the Body and Blood of Christ. The Tridentine definition certainly excluded the gross expressions of early times, so that even if the words are used in the baldest and most literal sense, the Mass is still a mystical communion, seeing that it is metaphysical substance which has been replaced—and metaphysical substance, or that which stands in its stead, cannot be dealt with by the digestive organs.

If some of us were to be pressed for a metaphysical theory at all adequate to our sacramental experience, it would not be less positive than the doctrine of transubstantiation, and would very likely prove as capable of being ridiculously travestied. Perhaps, after all, the wisest attitude is that set forth by a Free Catholic writer :¹

" This is My Body "—the words are spoken and the white Bread uplifted, and sense grips hands with faith and we

¹ Miss May Ollis Pelton, in a paper, " Devotion to our Lord in the Sacrament," read at a group Conference of Free Catholics in London and afterwards published in *The Christian Church*, October 1919 (Blackwell).

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know. And *then* at least we do not ask *how*. Indeed, as one reads the heart-breaking story of the controversies which have raged about this Holy Sacrament, one wonders if here we may not be called to set our busy reasoning aside and rest on simpler, more fundamental things. The child does not try to analyse his mother's kiss—it is enough for him to know that she loves. Again and again it is the explanation which divides us, while in our affirmation of the fact we are one.

At any rate, if one is able to appreciate the meaning of some of the Eucharistic hymns of the Wesleys,¹ he must be reluctant to adopt a scornful attitude toward Roman doctrine upon the subject :

Jesus at whose supreme command
We now approach to God,
Before us in Thy vesture stand,
Thy vesture dipped in blood !

The cup of blessing, blessed by Thee,
Let it Thy blood impart ;
The bread Thy mystic body be
And cheer each languid heart.

Now, Lord, on us Thy flesh bestow,
And let us drink Thy blood,
Till all our souls are filled below
With all the life of God.

¹ I am reminded by the Rev. George Eayrs, F.R.Hist.S., that some of Charles Wesley's eucharistic hymns were excluded from Methodist hymnals because of their extreme phraseology. Those here quoted, however, are in current use.

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Or again :

Come Holy Ghost, Thine influence shed,
And realize the sign ;
Thy life infuse into the bread,
Thy power into the wine.

Effectual let the tokens prove,
And made, by heavenly art,
Fit channels to convey Thy love
To every faithful heart.

We are not here committing ourselves to the doctrine of transubstantiation ; but such sacramental faith as these Methodist hymns indicate must surely be seen to require almost a philosophical equivalent of that doctrine, if the faith is to be theologically interpreted at all. What we are concerned to deny is that there is anything irreligious or materialistic in the Roman doctrine, or anything to vex or offend the souls of those who have really entered into the great sacramental experience.

Nor shall we admit that the doctrine of the Mass as sacrificial should trouble any one but a mid-Victorian rationalist. It certainly ought to be prized by evangelicals, when they understand it. We do not deny that it has been appallingly misapplied—as, indeed, what Christian doctrine has not ? But if a Roman priest believes that in his celebration he is offering Christ crucified as a sacrifice to God, is he so far doing more than every evangelical believes himself to do day by day ? And is not the sublimest evangelical experience centred in the identification of the believer with the self-offering of his Lord ? The doctrine of the Mass as a sacrifice

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regards it as the Church's pleading of Christ's sufferings for the sake of men, and her self-identification therewith. It is thus interpreted by Dr. Adrian Fortescue, whose qualifications for stating the authoritative Roman doctrine cannot be doubted :¹

The Holy Eucharist, then, is a true sacrifice, the same sacrifice as that of the cross. It is the same victim, offered by the same High Priest ; it is the same offering. It adds nothing to the one sacrifice, offered once for all ; it is that sacrifice. Christ, our High Priest, who lives ever to make intercession for us, continues in the Eucharist the act of oblation begun on the first Good Friday.

The loss of the sense of the unity and identity of the sacrifice has sometimes led to the notion that multitudinous Masses have a cumulative and quantitative effect. Upon such abuses Protestants may justly empty the vials of wrath. But the fundamental conception as set forth by Father Fortescue does not seem to carry us hopelessly beyond the verses of Philip Doddridge :

Hail ! sacred feast, which Jesus makes,
Rich banquet of His flesh and blood ;
Thrice happy he, who here partakes
That sacred stream, that heavenly food.

Why are these emblems still in vain
Before unwilling hearts displayed ?
Was not for you the victim slain ?
Are you forbid the children's bread ?

¹ Introduction to *The Missal, Liturgy for Layfolk* (Burns and Oates, 1912).

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And it requires trained powers of theological definition successfully to discriminate between Father Fortescue and the Wesleyan hymn :

Let all who truly bear,
The bleeding Saviour's name,
Their faithful hearts with us prepare,
And eat the Paschal Lamb.

This eucharistic feast
Our every want supplies ;
And still we by His death are blessed,
And share His sacrifice.

These hymns are more Catholic than Article XXVIII ; but there really is nothing very shocking in them. They happen to state in sacramental terms the burning heart of the Christian Faith.

What is lacking in the Roman Mass is that its actual celebration does not explicate its full religious meaning. If it is the identification of the Church with the Sacrifice of Christ, it is an act in which all communicants implicitly participate. It must be this, or it will lie open to the dangers of magical misinterpretation. A sacramentalist must be either a mystic or an idolater. But it is extremely difficult to see how the full meaning of the whole Church's communion is conveyed by a celebrant whose priesthood is supposed to be derived along a limited and exclusive channel of sacerdotal succession. Says Dr. Fortescue : ¹

Our Lord offered Himself for us on the cross ; He did not cease to make that act of offering when the soldier pierced

¹ *Op. cit.*

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His side ; living always as Priest to intercede for us, He still offers to His Father, through the ministry of His priests, the Body broken, the Blood shed once for all then.

Now, it is clear that communion is not consummated unless men and women enter into sacrificial identification with the Redeemer. The words just quoted from Father Fortescue do not digress from Pauline doctrine. The Atonement of Christ becomes morally effective in human souls only by such extension and perpetuation of the one Sacrifice. But the Roman conception of priesthood seems to thwart and limit the full consummation of communion, in that the priest, in making the offering, is the organ of Christ only in a severely limited sense. He is not expressing the believer, yet without his office, conceived as independent of the life of the whole Church, the Mass would be invalid. It is not easy to understand precisely wherein the self-identification of the believer with Christ is expressed in the sacrament, if the priestly office does not derive from the common life of Christian men. If the priest offers the sacrifice in a special and exclusive sense, in which layfolk may not participate, what is the precise reality of the communion? And how do the communicants discover their own organic fellowship, seeing that the sacrificial offering is performed by one who does not even claim to represent the conflux of human souls in Christ?

This criticism, as we shall see later, does not imply that the Church should have no specially chosen priesthood ; but it does mean that the validity of the Mass is most gloriously set forth as deriving from

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the sacrificial communion of believers consummated therein. Free Churchmen need to distinguish between the cramping and confining sacerdotal theory, which is the real defect of the Roman Mass (as it is also of the Anglican Eucharist in so far as it attempts to copy the Roman sacerdotal pattern), and those elements which we have previously discussed and which the Free Churches need to develop in order to give their own sacramental observance a meaning commensurate with their evangelical profession.

We say that the Roman sacerdotal theory does not express the true religious content of the Mass. From time to time the common life of the Church sweeps up to the altar, and uses the priest as its vehicle. Upon the stiff, unrepresentative theory, the priest's confession, with its insistent cry of *mea culpa*, while the celebrant, a sinful man beating his breast, obviously kneels with sinners before the crucified Saviour, introduces a meaningless confusion ; and the answer of the servers is an impertinence. The *Orate fratres* and other passages are equally inexplicable, except upon the hypothesis that the devotions of the Mass are much truer to spiritual realities than is the sacerdotal theory, which is supposed to defend and explain those devotions. Communion is the religious basis of the Mass—communion in sacrifice ; for Roman Catholics are warned that sacramental grace is received according to capacity and intention.

While the conception of communion within a fellowship of spiritual equality seems necessary in order to give its most profound significance to the Sacrament, and this involves a democratic and

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representative interpretation of institutions, there is no danger of Free Catholicism becoming loose and careless in its sacramental teaching. Protestantism has often become loose and careless. Catholics and Quakers are the people who have definite ideas about sacraments ; and we shall naturally be asked what we propose to do with the Quakers. They are, of course, too tough a people to submit to any pleasant arrangements made on their behalf ; they prefer to make their own. But the problem of what is called non-sacramental religion is not so intractable as it sometimes is thought to be. Yet the only Church which can afford to tolerate and indeed to approve of so-called non-sacramental quietism, must be one which holds high sacramental conceptions. If we regard all worship as implicitly sacrificial communion, there is a sense in which the plainest worship, since it must use some symbol and rite, has its sacramental element. And Catholicism ought to be big enough to include this pellucid testimony to the constant spiritual reference of religious observance. If by religious vocation a man may be ascetic in life, surely by special vocation a man may have the right to be ascetic in worship. St. Francis did not declare that the normal enjoyment of material things was evil ; and the Quaker does not deny the sacramental meaning of life. With the overwhelming majority of Christian men the Catholic sacraments rightly interpreted will always exercise supreme attraction and power. If a man is a Quaker by instinct and conviction he is not a normal Catholic, because he is not a normal man. But St. Francis was not a normal man. Vocational quietism which does not contra-

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dict the Catholic philosophy is hardly a greater test of the elasticity of Catholicism than vocational poverty. It must not be forgotten that St. Francis abstained from the sacramental use of decent clothing and good food, and that other Catholics have deliberately abstained from the sacramental use of soap and water, although Catholicism normally involves the sacramental use of these things.

Free Catholicism will not make much difficulty with Quakers, if Quakers will consent to be tolerant toward ordinary Christians. But it does insist very emphatically that Free Church conceptions have no necessary connection with non-sacramental or semi-sacramental theories, and that they do not really involve the hazy notions and poor, colourless practices which have been accidentally associated with Free Church worship. We do not insist that all Christians shall revel in a riot of symbolism ; but we see no reason why a Free Churchman should be doomed to wallow in ugliness. Free Churchmen, if they so desire, have as much right to make use of the full Catholic symbolism as Romans have ; and their desire may be excellently founded. We admit that symbolism and decoration may sometimes be overdone and may run to unwarrantable extremes. We do not all look with entire favour upon the vestiarian extravagances of the old-fashioned Quakers or the modern Salvation Army. Such practices seem rather like asking the Lord Mayor to wear his robe and chain while serving behind the counter of his shop. Perhaps this is mere timorousness in some of us. Nevertheless we believe that where religion is passionate and joyous it will normally want to hang out

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some signs, at least in its actual celebrations, to show that it is itself and nothing else.

It is sometimes objected concerning the more gorgeous symbolism of Catholic worship, that this sort of thing seems to carry us far away from the Gospel according to St. Mark. It does. It carries us to the Apocalypse of St. John. It is said that a priest wearing costly vestments does not seem to be celebrating the worship of the poor and lowly carpenter of Nazareth. But he does not pretend to be doing just that. He is celebrating the worship of One who stands in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, clothed with a garment down to the foot and girt with a golden girdle ; whose voice is like the sound of many waters, in whose right hand are seven stars ; and on whose head are many crowns. We submit that the casual visitor to any ordinary Free Church would never suspect, from anything there to be seen, that our Lord had ever been either born or crucified or exalted, or that anything in particular had ever happened either to Him or to us.

Surely there can be no mortal sin in making certain that, whether the preacher is intelligible or not, no person attending a normal Christian service shall fail to have both the sorrows and the glories of Christ forcibly suggested for his meditation. The Church cannot possibly be too churchly, any more than a man can be too manly, or a spade too much like a spade. For the Church is a definite thing in this world. She is more wonderful than all fairy lore, and more heroic than the sagas. There can be no just complaint if the House of God does not appear to be as any ordinary house. Its foundations are in

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a stable, but its windows open upon a sea of glass mingled with fire. The Church need not fear to deck herself in beauty, seeing that she is the Bride of the Lamb and the visible token of that city into which the glory and honour of the nations shall be brought. She alone can consecrate all earthly treasure and take from the glamour of gold its secret poison ; and well would it be if men should refuse to own or to love any of this world's beauty or wealth until they had first gleamed in consecration upon her altars.

It will be seen that Free Catholicism does not involve slovenly conceptions of worship and sacraments. But the opinion has been expressed that it has not really faced the question of the relation between the Free Church principle and the historic orders of bishop, priest and deacon. The reply is that those orders are regarded as normal in history and regulative for the Church in the future ; but their inner, spiritual meaning needs to receive an interpretation consonant with the nature of the Church as the fellowship of souls in Christ. Whatever theory may be held concerning those historic orders, it may be admitted without hesitation that priesthood, at any rate, answers a genuine religious need and that it cannot pass away from Christianity without a grave deprivation being caused. But Christian priesthood derives not from any previously existing caste, but from the very nature of the Christian religion which other priesthoods have only foreshadowed. The value of ascribing priesthood to our exalted Lord is plain and practical. In Him the humanity which we share is carried to the throne

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of the Most High. But if that same Christ draws men to Himself and indwells them so that they partake of His nature, the corporate life of the redeemed society, consisting of men and women unified by sharing His life, must necessarily share His priesthood. The character of the Church is hereby determined ; but upon any real and living understanding of Christian experience the Church's priesthood is organic, and shared by all believers : so that the full interpretation of the priestly office of the ministry must find its firmest ground in the nature of the Christian society.

It is obvious that any objective theory of Christ's atoning sacrifice must depend upon a doctrine of his real and representative humanity ; although, strangely enough, the liberal theologies which have emphasized almost exclusively the human nature of Jesus have usually retained only subjective theories of the Atonement, whilst some theologies which have almost dangerously confined their witness to His deity have seen only an objective significance in His death. This confusion has much to answer for. But it seems clear that it is only as Representative Man that He can do anything morally effective for us as toward God. Thus His priesthood is the endowment of His humanity, and consequently the priestly office which is derived from Him is not displayed in its essential religious meaning when it is conceived as being bestowed entirely apart from the common religious experience. All Christian priesthood must, like Christ's, be representative. It exists, indeed, in order to perform the function of that society which has found its incorporation

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already, by the evangelical appropriation of the benefits of the Saviour's High-Priesthood.

Caste theories of priesthood leave a chasm between the life of the Church and the heavenly intercession of Christ. Certainly a man is divinely called to the priesthood; but he is called by the Spirit of that same High Priest who indwells all Christian men, and his special priesthood receives its full validity only when it is recognized and accepted by the whole priestly body. This truly is a Free Church conception, although Free Churchmen seldom make anything of it. But precisely because of their negligence they are suffering from confusion and vagueness in their function of worship and in their notions of church-membership; while, as we have seen, the Churches which do emphasize the fact of priesthood, base it for the most part upon theories which limit its religio-social significance. What is now required is that the Churches which claim the historic Catholic succession in the particular sense shall re-interpret priesthood as representative; admitting the rights of the laity to some efficacious choice and sanction in the recognition of the Church's ministry; and that the Free Churches shall take bold measures to set forth the priestly nature of their own life and worship and to declare the real priesthood with which they endow their ministry by the very act of calling it into being.

There seems to be no promise of synthesis by regarding the clergy of the Church of England as exercising a priestly ministry and supposing that the ministry of the Free Churches is exclusively prophetic. The division does not correspond to the

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spiritual facts. Any Church must be both prophetic and priestly, or its attachment to Christ is partial. And it does not matter if some Free Churches deny that in ordaining a minister they are recognizing a priest. They cannot help doing so if they are within the great corporate life which is rooted in Christ.

If it is objected that the priesthood of the Free Churches, though admitted as a fact, is still irregular, in that it remains apart from the historic episcopate, the reply is that when episcopacy becomes representative and democratic, the servant of the Church depending upon her suffrages and expressing the authority shared by her humblest members, Free Churchmen will have no legitimate excuse, at least upon this question, for remaining apart. It is, of course, important that the historic episcopate should be recognized; but it is also important that the historic Christian dislike of the episcopate should not be forgotten. At least, it needs to be accounted for. When the suppressed and perverted forces of divine democracy are allowed due scope, not for the abolition of the historic orders, but for their fuller explication as having rightful honour in Christ's Commonwealth, modern Free Churchmen will commit grievous sin if they prolong the disruption of the Church for the sake of pet hierarchies of their own.¹ Few men would now die for the hard and fast congregational theory. And when Convocation becomes a court of the whole Church, with real power to

¹ Orders and guilds might of course retain their special forms of government in loyalty to the normal and general government of the Church.

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exercise the will of the Church, Methodists will cease to have much reason for preferring to call it Conference.

We deny, however, that the abrogation of the historic orders by some Churches has totally severed them from the actual Church tradition, completely invalidated their ministry or hopelessly impaired their sacraments. If the fundamental reality of Church-life is the sacrificial communion of men in Christ, what we see in the sects and divisions of Christendom is not a complete differentiation between the Body of Christ and spurious imitations thereof. We do not regard some sacraments and orders as entirely valid and some as hopelessly invalid. We see various degrees of validity, and the validity is impaired primarily by the measure of the breach of fellowship incurred in the origin and continued existence of the sects ; and it must be said that few sects have arisen purely by their own wickedness. It is most probable, for example, that Rome invalidated her own sacraments when Luther invalidated his. The description of any Church's sacraments as only partially valid is not intended as contrasting them unfavourably with some absolute and perfect standard somewhere existing. Because of the Church's divisions, no perfectly valid sacrament exists upon the earth. Rome herself, upon our hypothesis, tacitly admits this when she consents to draw the distinction between herself and the whole Christian community, admitting that she is not precisely co-terminous with that community. She admits that fellowship is broken ; and so long as she even implicitly adopts this attitude the pathway

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to the Holy Catholic Church is not impassably closed.

Free Catholicism, broadly speaking, involves the belief that by the approach of the Catholic Churches toward a restatement of their theories under the guiding conception that the Church is the divinely founded democracy and the sacrament of society ; and by the corresponding advance of the Free Churches in the explication of the sacrificial and priestly nature of their own worship, the problem of Christian reunion will seem far less difficult than it does at present. Even where the difficulty is complicated by doctrinal differences, the emergence of the Church's fuller meaning will in all likelihood effect a searching revaluation of those doctrines which have arisen as extreme reactions upon past misinterpretations of Catholic truth. Let it be understood that Free Catholicism teaches salvation as personal but also as organic : as free, but also corporate ; and it will become possible for denominations to restate their own witness in such a way that it will retain no separative meaning or consequences.

There is no doubt a close connection between the rise of the Free Catholic ideal and the growing consciousness of the dire social need of the twentieth century. The industrial advance of the past hundred years, its worst casualties succoured by a somewhat too utilitarian philanthropy, served to screen from the eyes of men the most dangerous tendencies of the modern movement. Prophets of insight, from Matthew Arnold to Rudolf Eucken, have sometimes discerned tragic possibilities beneath the boasted successes of modernity, and they were at length

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revealed with ghastly suddenness to the popular eye in those heavy and horrible summer days of August 1914. Society slipped upon the edge of the bottomless abyss, and still struggles, shocked and disturbed, at the appalling brink.

It is commonly perceived that the future safety of the human race must combine the creation of a freedom finer than the loftiest dreams of the English, with the cultivation of a corporate loyalty more firm and solid than that of regimented Germany. We have come within sight of our ultimate social need, the identification of personal self-expression and the common good of the race ; and here diplomats and labour leaders alike are impotent. We see that industrial, economic and political activities, which at times seem to fill the horizon, are but the means whereby the main spiritual problem reaches its full formulation ; and by those activities alone that problem cannot be solved. Upon the mind of this age there must burst that sense of need which, invading the life of man from time to time, at various stages of his struggles and wanderings, has always prepared the way for religious revival.

We desire to see the Church of Christ Free and Catholic, not as attempting to suit a passing situation, but as arriving, after centuries of incomplete synthesis followed ever by further analysis, at the full consciousness of her own meaning as the actual reconstruction of human society, through the redemption of the natural man into a supernatural fellowship.

It was fondly but foolishly hoped that the experience of the Great War would be sufficient to carry

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men forward to the realization of the social dream. When it was observed by the better mind of Europe that the war had become a "dog-fight," men declared, hope springing eternal in the human breast, that peace would see the elevation of life into brotherhood. But, as Mr. Lloyd Thomas has said, "peace did not bring it about":

We spoke of making the world safe for Democracy: we spoke of making a new world: we spoke of making the country fit for heroes to live in and so forth. But gradually we have sunk back into the old scramble and scuffle for selfish ends and privileges, for personal advantages, and re-introduced once more a bitter competition for private profits and unjust shares in material goods. We have lost sight of the fact that our humanity is for ever *one*, that we are members of one body, subjects of one moral sovereignty and spiritual kingdom, that our labour is co-operation and our joy is fellowship.¹

But so long as human hopes are made to depend upon secular events and combinations, those hopes will be doomed to disappointment. We regard the Christian Church as the historical effect, distinct and unique, of the entrance into this world of redemptive power in Christ, creative, affirmative, socializing. She is the City of God coming down from heaven; and we desire to see her effectively revealing this before the eyes of a distraught and stricken generation.

And we know that behind the Society of Free Catholics there are men and women in great numbers,

¹ *The Humanizing of Industry*: an address delivered at the Ninth Annual Co-operative Convention, Birmingham, 1919.

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thousands who have never heard of the movement, who desire the things we desire, and whose prayers ascend with ours. So far, there has come a more ready response from the Church of England than from the Free Churches. Roman Catholics are interested, but the conditions of their loyalty to their own communion prohibit any very active assistance ; but Anglican priests find no jarring notes in this fellowship, though they may have to endure uninformed criticism from without. Free Churchmen, however, are in some cases somewhat sceptical or mildly suspicious, though the younger generation of ministers is increasingly sympathetic and often enthusiastic in support. Three criticisms passed upon the movement must be briefly dealt with. In the first place it is said to be the latest of the ever-changing intellectual fashions of the restless modern mind, doomed to pass away as rapidly as its predecessors, because it is no more than an intellectual adventure. We can thankfully say that this is not a true estimate. Whatever may be the end of the movement, it began in prayer, and it has constantly carried the joyful sense of religious discovery. We do not flatter ourselves upon any supposed intellectual superiority, nor do we care to think of ourselves as an esoteric band. We believe we have a gospel that can be preached in the streets to the common crowds ; for we know that Jesus, who was gladly heard by the common people, has found us. It is the secret dream of some Free Catholics to travel the roads of England as humble preachers of Christ and the Church.

We are charged again with a tendency toward

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disloyalty to our respective denominations. But with many of us the case is that Free Catholicism has restored us to denominational loyalty when our allegiance was flagging. We do not pretend to be satisfied with those denominations, and in this we are at one with most of their members who have commenced to think. But we wish to stay within their boundaries, precisely for the sake of the Church Universal, at which we desire them to arrive.

Finally, we are accused of being in our second childhood. Thank God, we are ; and are therefore nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven than before we had escaped from that adult world, which is the camp of the Philistines. No Free Catholic has bound himself by his membership of the Society to any use of Catholic rite or symbol ; but it is undeniable that most of the Free Churchmen who have entered have cultivated a love for beauty in the sanctuary. We do not blush when wrathful nonconformists speak of ecclesiastical millinery. We love the symbol because we have fallen in love with two worlds. We wish to worship beautifully because we worship the Fairest among ten thousand and the Bright Morning Star. We do not feel at all wicked about it.

But our supreme concern is the renewal of Holy Church as the organ of social salvation. We desire to see peace on earth, and the wiping away of tears. We want this age, stumbling through blood and darkness, and assailed by awful menace, to behold the spires and towers of the Church of Christ as the pinnacles of the City of God ; and we desire to hear,

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where strife and anger are loud to-day, the singing of young men and maidens in many gardens. Ours may seem an impossible dream. Our only consolation is in the earnest faith that it is not ours at all, but God's.

VI

THE CHURCH'S PRIESTHOOD :

RELIGIOUS revival has often been connected with the restoration and renewed apprehension of some forgotten or neglected aspect of the fully rounded body of Christian truth. I need offer no historical illustrations of this, for it is widely admitted ; and we Methodists are in no great danger of forgetting it. It is perhaps the most solid and valid principle of our denominational apologetic. But while we are completely justified in declaring this principle I would venture to say that we need constantly to remind ourselves that its practice is fraught with danger : not essentially, but often actually. I say this humbly, and I do trust I may say it without incurring the slightest suspicion of contempt or disloyalty toward the particular denomination in which I was baptized, nurtured, taught and confirmed in the faith, and to which, under God, I owe far more than any words can express. The danger which often accompanies the emphasis—the entirely necessary emphasis—of a single aspect of truth, is that a Church may become so pre-occupied with that special witness as to allow other great and

An Address delivered to the Rochdale District Meeting
(United Methodist Church), at Rawtenstall, 1919.

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vital parts of doctrine and practice to fall into desuetude, with the result that sectarianism is generated, and the very cause, the very principle concerned, now held in isolation from the whole body of truth, begins to wilt and wither. I think that, as a matter of fact, that is what is the matter with Christendom. Christianity survives in disconnected parts and fragments, not of course utterly and entirely disconnected, but in parts and fragments which are not so vitally and organically connected as to preserve the health of the whole body. There is no Church in Christendom which is not a sect : and the recognition of this fact is the prime necessity in the ecclesiastical situation of our times.

Now, I firmly believe that we Methodists possess principles and graces which are essential and which other Churches will need to appropriate, and that therefore, if we were to abandon our witness and make an unconditional surrender to Rome or to Canterbury, it would be an act of disloyalty to the whole Church of Christ. But it is quite unnecessary for me to enforce that consideration. My purpose is to remind you that we also have our needs. There are truths and graces which we must learn to accept, if we are to keep our Methodist witness alive. If that witness is not to die away into formality and vague uncertainty, it must be re-incorporated in the whole body of truth : and if we are to play any noble part in constructing that great Christian synthesis for which we already hear the voice of the future crying, we must not wait for some mechanical adaptation of mere ecclesiastical organization to bring us into contact with those principles and

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graces which we need : we must commence to work toward that synthesis as a spiritual reality, and to do so from our own standpoint, within our own Church. I conceive that this is the task laid by the Holy Ghost upon all the scattered fragments of Christ's Church in this age : and it is laid upon Methodism.

I know full well that the ordinary position is, in effect, that the distinctive witness of our Church is quite antithetic to the distinctive witness of some older Churches : and that the antithesis has passed beyond any possibility of reconciliation. But that is precisely what I set out to deny. If there can be no synthesis of individual assurance with corporate solidarity, then the Church has no word of guidance in the most crucial and painful problem of society to-day. And, briefly, our task is to synthesize our glorious conviction of individual assurance with the organic conception of Christian life. Our great need is to revive in our midst the doctrine of the Church's priestly nature and significance ; for the priestly conception of the Church involves just that sense of corporate, organic unity in spiritual life which is needed to maintain our doctrine of individual assurance in practical effectiveness.

I beseech you not to be alarmed at this, or at the implications I shall draw from it. You are not bond-slaves to shibboleths, nor are you frightened of bogies. The day has gone by when there was any excuse for an intelligent Free Churchman bridling at the word priesthood, for although we have neglected the word and underestimated the reality which it expresses, priesthood is a fact without which we

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could not live. It is part of the instinctive religious expression of mankind. It was deeply founded in the Old Dispensation, and although the Bishop of Carlisle thinks Christ abolished all further need for it, I shall ask your consent to differ very widely from him; for if the perfect priesthood of Christ abrogates all other priesthood, then surely Christ as perfect prophet abrogates the need of other prophets: and we certainly shall never believe that. I take it that what Christ does is to gather up the priesthood of all believers into a perfect expression within the very life of God: just as His perfect sacrifice includes our imperfect sacrifices, but does not abolish the need for them. Every good parent, every good friend, every good teacher quite obviously fulfils a priestly office. Every intermediary between man and God is of priestly nature: for intermediaries do not necessarily separate—they may quite naturally connect. But, apart from that, we cannot escape the burden of our own priesthood, for the simple reason that Christ is the great High Priest and the Church is His Body. Christ cannot be formed in us without His priesthood being formed in us. We cannot share His life without sharing His priestly office. Unless our faith in Christ's indwelling is only sentimentalism, this seems to be a conclusion from which we cannot escape.

Now, the Priesthood of Christ is a profound and glorious truth, of most wonderful practical meaning in actual life. It is founded upon the faith that in His incarnation he shared the human nature which belongs to us all: that He took that nature to the cross, through the grim gates of death, and along

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the shining pathway of resurrection, to be exalted upon the very throne of God. That is to say : human nature is now integrated into the very life of God. In some deep, mystical way, " He pleads with man's voice by the marvellous sea ; He is our kinsman, now." That, to some people may seem a fact of little moment, even if it is true ; but it is quite easy to show its gigantic significance for this world's life.

We look at the world to-day, torn and scarred by shocking wounds. We have seen the accumulated knowledge of generations employed upon the Christless task of war. We have seen human bodies smashed and maimed and stamped into the mud upon a hundred battlefields : human hearts broken and tortured : human hopes blasted without pity. We have seen society in chaos. We have seen vulgarity and mammon lift their heads to shout down the advocates of righteousness. We have seen tumultuous passions and lusts let loose to turn the world into something like hell. And we might well be paralysed with dismay. This—after all that martyrs and prophets and apostles have wrought ! This—after all that poets have sung and seers have foretold ! What is this humanity of ours ? See how it falls and grovels and wallows ! Yet we Christians cannot be dismayed, we cannot surrender hope, we will not speak the word of despair. Our eyes may weep and our very souls may writhe : but we know that humanity with Jesus has gone into the Holy of Holies. We know there is a priestly manhood in the highest heaven. And because we believe in the organic unity of the race, we know that we are represented above. Not until we have surrendered our

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humanity can that be altered. Christ is the High Priest of the race. And when we are saddened by the frivolity, the materialism, the blatant pride, the degrading poverty or the stony indifference around us, let us remember that our manhood is not only here below. In Christ it is there—above. Manhood is upon the throne.

Now, if the Church is Christ's Church, I cannot see how it can escape sharing His priesthood. Holy Scripture exhausts all possible metaphors in the attempt to express the organic connection, the vital unity, of Christ and the Church. The Church is His Body, the very vehicle of His continued self-expression in this world. He is the Vine (not merely the stem, but the Vine), within which the branches have their place. The Church is His Bride, and He Himself had said that husband and wife were one flesh. Not only so, but the Christian experience as expressed in the New Testament most emphatically includes the consciousness of priesthood. You know the passages as well as I do. The Church, indeed, must be priestly, for she is simply humanity integrated into God in Christ.

But how shall our priesthood be expressed? Certainly not by a caste-priesthood, for that does not express the priesthood of all Christian believers. If believers having no priesthood are part of the Church, then the Church is so far not a priestly body. If the Church is a priestly body, and the laity have no priesthood, then the laity is not part of the Church. Roman conceptions of priesthood have possibly done serious harm: but we must not allow that fact to deprive us of a great possession. We must not

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entirely surrender priesthood to false interpretations. We are supposed to accept the priesthood of all believers : but we have neglected that part of our faith to our own hurt. We have now, for the sake of Christendom, to revive it and make it real : for upon the revival of a democratic doctrine of priesthood hang vast issues, both religious and social. What does it mean ? It means that the portion of the human race which is identified with Christ, shares with Him the task of offering the priestly sacrifice for the whole corporate life of mankind. Just as He offers Himself for us all, so we offer ourselves, identified with Him, for one another and for the remainder of the race. We present our sacrifice unified with His : our lives incorporated in His. That seems to me to belong to the most mystical roots of our Christian faith and experience. Our individuality vividly assured of its reconstruction in the redeemed and sacrificial society of which Christ is the foundation, is a true synthesis of Methodism and Catholicism. But if that is our faith, it will have its natural incarnation, its appropriate expression. It will influence both our worship and our practice.

Believe me, I am conscious that I am addressing an assembly which contains many wiser heads, and lives of far greater devotion, than mine ; but when a man sincerely believes that he has seen a light, it is his duty to say so, specially to his nearest and dearest, and what I say now is said with entire good will. It seems clear to me that the Free Churches of this country, including our own, have no sufficient theory and no adequate practice of worship. We know to our sorrow how many congregations attend

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service or stay away according to who is the preacher appointed for the occasion. But even if they were to come when the poorest duffer was in the pulpit, determining to derive some lesson from him, that would not in itself represent the full meaning of Christian worship. We have got to make our people clearly understand that worship is not mere edification and certainly not a form of entertainment, but an ordinance whose whole soul and meaning is sacrificial. They come to worship to present themselves to Christ and to the Redeemed Fellowship. They come to offer themselves, all they have and all they are—to unite themselves with the perpetual sacrifice of Christ. Young ladies who fancy themselves terribly modern and dangerous sometimes ask me if I seriously think a man cannot be a Christian without coming to church. I know what is the matter; but I never hesitate about the answer. You cannot keep Christianity alive without public worship, for the simple reason that a merely individualistic piety misses the central, socializing power of the faith. Public worship signifies that we give ourselves to God and to each other. It is the essential outward sign of the fellowship of the mystery. It is the surrender of self to God and Humanity, expressed in a public social act. Moreover, it has an even wider significance. In this act of worship we enter with Christ within the holy place for the sake of all the sinful, blind and broken humanity in the world: for those who stay in the noisy outer courts of life. We bear the common human nature and we carry it in our own persons, along with Christ, to the Everlasting Mercy Seat. The roaring crowds may

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be heedless and frivolous upon the streets: there may be only a handful of people in your church; but there a solemn act has been committed. Something has been done for all that worldly throng, even though they know it not. A sublime service has been rendered. The handful of believers has offered the priestly sacrifice. And when we say Divine Service will be held at 6.30 p.m., we mean, or we ought to mean, that a holy deed will actually be done for the sake of the world. I say we have to get this into the hearts and heads of our people; and when it is there, the bright, brief and brainless sort of entertainment which is too often palmed off as Christian worship, will naturally cease.¹

I want, however, to carry you still further. If the essential meaning of all Christian worship is communion in a priestly sacrifice in which Christ and His people are both priesthood and sacrifice, it surely follows that the central and most prominent place in our public worship ought to be occupied by the Sacrament of Holy Communion; for in that Sacrament the innate and characteristic meaning of the Church is set forth. Remember that we believe it to be with us a valid sacrament. It is not a mere ordinance, but a sacrament; and it is therefore more than a memorial feast. Will any one object if I say that it is at once the acceptance and offering of Christ under the veil of visible things, and the identification of ourselves with Him in His agony and intercession? These elements, at any rate, are His own chosen symbols, and some of us know how in this Sacrament His holy hands have been placed

¹ See Orchard, *The New Catholicism*, p. 7.

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upon us and His kiss of peace pressed upon our brows. Herein we offer with Him His own broken Body and shed Blood as our redemption : and herein we offer ourselves for the sake of each other and for the sake of the world. Is there anything superstitious here ? Are we so utterly devoid of ordinary mystical perception as not to be able to grasp this ? There is no contradiction between the Evangelical and the Sacramentalist if each will follow his own path to its true goal. That goal is the re-establishment of society in Christ ; and because we live in a material world, that supernatural Communion must have its outward, visible and special channel and sign. And I believe that without the slightest derogation of Evangelical Free Church principles, we may place this greatest symbol of the Church's priesthood in the forefront of all our Church life ; and if we think it so glad and glorious and blessed that we set it to music and clothe it with colour and beauty, we still shall be no less Free or Evangelical. We shall simply make it plain that we are Churchmen : but evangelical, because we build upon no other foundation than Christ incarnate, crucified and risen : and free because this priesthood belongs to all faithful Christians, and the special priesthood of the chosen ministry does but represent and symbolize the priesthood of the common body. And if the whole Church is a priesthood, the ministry must surely be a priesthood. I am an advanced democrat in all things, but I certainly believe that a priestly body has called me to represent its priesthood.

But I said that the Church's priesthood must find expression both in worship and in practice. I want

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to emphasize very briefly the practical effects. We all know the trouble that is in the world to-day: the threatened disruption of society; the rivalry of nation against nation, class against class; the turmoil and strife of contending factions. The Church of Christ expresses the organic unity—the ideal fellowship—of all mankind. She knows no temporal barriers between the souls of men for whom Christ has died. She draws men from mill and forge, from study and market place, rich and poor, learned and unlettered: she brings them from the ardent adventures of the West and from the unchanged dreams of the East: she calls them amidst the snows of Labrador and in the steaming forests of Africa, and she says: “Upon my bosom, all ye are brethren.” And she bids them to kneel before her altar—all their rivalries and divisions forgotten, all their enmities overcome. She binds them in one common sacrificial life to the sacrifice of Christ. While she remains in the world, the worst can never happen to the human race: for she is the priestly Body, the holy Bride of the Redeemer. That is her meaning: and, thank God, in spite of all her own tragic history, in spite of the wounds which have marred her fair form, and the tears of shame upon her countenance, she has never utterly apostasized from this faith.

But to-day she must arise with a new and flaming consciousness of her mission. To-day she must know herself with complete conviction. She must know that she is one and not many, for she has to make of all the discordant sections of mankind one brotherhood. She must know that she is of priestly

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birth, having the entrance to the Holy of Holies, having the Keys of the Kingdom, having the power to call men home. Therefore her life must be passionately sincere and her voice must be as clear as a clarion. Whatever politicians and journalists say, whatever the clamorous cliques and coteries of men may demand, she must demand peace and good will and fellowship amongst men. She must stand in the earth, a beautiful unearthly rebel against all that tears and rends asunder the life of the race : for she represents no party, no division, no nation, but mankind made one in Christ.

It is no light honour, no small privilege to belong to her. But it is no little thing she asks of us. The labours of apostles and the diligence of scholars and the blood of martyrs she has claimed and received. And shall she not also receive the best thought and the noblest service which we have to offer ? Shall we not bring our whole being and all our possessions into her ? Let those who receive these sacred elements this morning think well what they are doing. They are binding themselves into the Body in which all are brethren : they are pledging themselves against all feuds between nation and nation, class and class. They take these symbols in common : and they must take this communion into practical life. They are offering themselves to be sacrificed with Christ for the redemption of a wicked world. Let no prejudice, no pride, no selfishness cause us to hold back our self-offering and make our communion false. Christ our Priest is also our Passover, and He is sacrificed for us : and we cannot share His priesthood without sacrificing ourselves.

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It seems to me, it stands ever more clearly before my mind, that this is the orientation which the life and worship of the Church need at this time. And if we recover it before it is too late, there shall come to pass signs and wonders. There will arise from us a holy witness which will astonish and save the world. In our midst there will grow a love strong enough to shame the proud and cruel and to cover the earth with kindness. And men shall know that our prayers are not in vain : that Christ is in His Church, to still the tempests of this age and to bind up the broken heart of the world.

VII

METHODISM IN THE NEW AGE¹

Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.—
ST. MATTHEW xiii. 52.

THIS is our Festival of Dedication ; but because we have not yet recovered from a certain Free Church fear of beauty, even in our ecclesiastical nomenclature, we still call this occasion our Trust Anniversary. Beautiful thoughts deserve beautiful expression : and the purpose for which we are met here is one of beauty and of strength. It seems to me that we ought specially to reflect this day upon the meaning of this edifice ; the significance of this building standing in this place at this time. And we ought to consider the purport of the worship which proceeds week by week within these walls. I would particularly ask the attention of the younger men and women present, because as the days go by, the burden of responsibility for this church must fall more and more upon them ; and it will be their task to draw out the implications of the past

¹ Preached at Sandyford United Methodist Church, Newcastle-on-Tyne, October 12, 1919.

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in courageous consideration of the needs of the future.

I want them to be prepared to accept it as a high privilege and an honourable employment, to be discharged with intelligence, with diligence, and with constant prayer. For I invite you to reflect that this church is no mere pile of common masonry standing at the corner of a humdrum road ; but its every stone is saturated with holy meaning. I would remind you that this congregation is no haphazard concourse of people met together to transact some small and transient business, but a fellowship tied by supernatural bonds, founded upon the apostles and martyrs, and belonging to the communion of saints : a spiritual edifice of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone. I desire that our church shall know and understand itself, enter deeply into its own meaning, cultivate its life, not indeed in order to nourish a sectarian spirit or any form of spiritual pride ; but that in the name of that Holy Catholic Church which our Lord desires for His Bride, we may bring forth a witness faithful at once to all the mighty past and potent for a future yet more glorious.

We are gathered here this morning before the heavenly altar, joining our hearts with Christ as He makes the mystic sacrifice ; and no matter what havoc the divisions of men have wrought in days gone by, we realize, I trust, that we, as Methodists, are within the One Church Universal : that her great life is ours if we will have it, that we are flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone. I want you to think of our Church in this way. But let us first

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remember that this particular church is a noble inheritance for us who belong to it. Although its outward, visible expression in stone and wood is new, there live within it high traditions and the worthy names of the dear and holy dead: names known and beloved in that branch of Methodism from which we are sprung, and esteemed in this city. Within this church lingers also the incense of prayer offered by many humble souls whose names are written only in the Lamb's Book of Life. And these things are our possession to be treasured and revered.

But not only so. I hold that all the history of Christendom is our history. We cannot admit that there is in the world somewhere a portion of Christendom which is the only Church, and that we are outside the pale, exiles and homeless wanderers without real communion or authority. At present, every Church in Christendom, being a section, is in one sense a sect. Not one is the only spotless Bride. But we have all the same unearthly origin and must find our true meaning in one and the same end. And I love to think that at this festival of remembrance there is a cloud of witnesses all unseen but very near, and that beside the Methodist saints who come to bless us are the saints whom the whole Church of God recognizes—back to the holy men who first uplifted the cross in the old Northumbrian wild, and beyond them an innumerable company of every nation and kindred.

For Methodism exists for the sake of the whole Church. It came into existence by the providence of God at a special time and for a special reason.

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It came because of what had gone before, and because of what was yet to come. And if we make of it a barrier to keep us apart from the common life of Christendom, instead of a door opening into the Church Universal, we shall be forfeiting our birth-right. Facing this new age we have to be loyal to the past, loyal even to the inner meaning of its tragic misadventures; and we have also to be faithful to the dawning future, warming our hearts at the fires of memory and opening our eyes to the light of vision. We must be as a householder bringing forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Our Lord spoke of a scribe, a man presumably of somewhat literal mind, a student of the old law, a guardian of the old ways, an enemy of change. But the Gospel has a place for the scribe. Give him a vision of God's kingdom, and he will deduce from the past the true method of future progress. There is hope for the most stuffy and old-fashioned of us. To love the past does not necessarily mean that we shall want to live in the past for ever. That would be a betrayal of the past which was crowded with movement. The true lover of the past cherishes it in order to discover the direction of God's purposes, that he may help to carry them forward, amidst the perplexities of the present, to their divine consummation. The conservative and the liberal instinct are both necessary in any organic development. It is not quite true, that, as the song asserts, every boy and girl is born either conservative or liberal. We are all more or less one and more or less the other. The complete conservative would be dead and the complete liberal would be mad. Therefore our Lord

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here gives utterance to a word of profound sanity which we must apply to our Church-life. We have to produce before the eyes of the world things new and old ; but we have to bring them from our treasure and not from our rubbish-heap. We have to produce *values*. There are in all denominations old things which are best consigned to oblivion. There are in every age new fashions which are worthless. But we have to set forth in conjunction the precious things of yesterday whose value will increase with the passing years, and those worthy things of this day which prophets and many righteous men have desired to see.

I ask you, then, to consider in a spirit of wisdom and courage the situation which confronts the Church in the world to-day. That situation is the real field of our operations, and we shall serve no good purpose by shutting our eyes to it and by trying to assume that we are in another century or upon another planet. I do not think you will be frightened by conclusions which scare only the feeble-minded and offend only petulant bigots. There is work to be done which calls for serious thought and great resolution, and you will not be alarmed as you see the task taking shape ; for unless we can set up a sign in this bewildered and sinful modern world and herald a new order, the collapse of the old order will involve us all in hopeless chaos.

First, then, we must consider that we have now come to the end of a most remarkable period of human history. The great age of analysis, the period of the separating out of elements, of negation

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and ruthless criticism, and individualism of judgment, has reached its climax. The sifted values have been closely scrutinized and rigorously tested. To those who have been born and bred in the atmosphere of this period, who have received its traditions and modes of thought, and have been accustomed to its effects, living by such gleams of positive truth as its stormy skies have afforded, it may well seem that there can be no other way of life and that what exists to-day is normal and abiding. But those who have given long months and years to the study of the history of thought and action can see plainly that old things are still passing away and that all things are not yet made new. In other words, they behold this modern world, not as indicating the final orientation of life, but as an interlude. The past from which we have come is not to be abandoned, but having been analysed and evaluated, to be resumed with more intelligent purpose and upon new levels of activity.

The present condition of the world has its origin in the close of the Middle Ages. What do we see there? We see the great modern nations emerging; but we see also that because the Roman Church, which was actually the Church of Europe, claimed to exercise amongst the sovereign nations that political and temporal oversight which, not altogether needlessly, she had exercised in the more formless political life of earlier times, those nations threw off her yoke. Let us clearly understand the capital fact that this proceeding was not taken chiefly in the interests of religion, but in the interests of national self-consciousness and political autonomy; and that

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because of this, the movement for the reform of abuses which was developing within the Catholic Church was perverted and deflected from its true end. The result was that religion, which is essentially a combining, socializing force, was forced into the background. Instead of being the pervading atmosphere in which all human affairs were conducted, it became a mere appendage to life, thrust into a secondary position by the insistent claims of purely secular affairs. I hope you will not be too greatly astonished when I assert the indisputable fact that by all the evidence known to historical scholarship, there were fewer signs of vigorous religious life after what is called the Reformation, than there were previously, in those lands which took the Protestant name. This, however, is not a defence of the Roman hierarchy. The officials of the Roman Church were possibly more to blame than any one else.

In our own country, as in others, religion now fell under the strict surveillance of the political government. But the Church of England, in spite of official tyranny exercised on her behalf, began as a failure ; for she never captured more than a portion of the religious life of England. There grew up against her, by the pressure of that reforming impulse which had been present in the " old religion," those democratic theories of the Church which we find in Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. Unfortunately, the reforming impulse, in order to offer stouter opposition to the autocracy of Rome upon one hand and the secular power of princes upon the other, now took up with that Calvinistic interpretation of the Gospel which confuses some of its

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loveliest truths and certainly results in the decline of joy. It also denied far more than there was any need to deny. Even the Church of England was for a time so eager to oppose Rome that she too made the mistake of opposing the Catholic religion—which is not quite the same thing. It was the High-Churchmanship of Laud which saved her. On the continent Luther, as he grew older, became himself more of a Calvinist. Religion certainly languished, whatever may be the explanation. Luther admitted it. Anglican scholars admit that there was a religious decline in England. Something had passed out of the life of the common people, and it is no exaggeration to say that the Western world as a whole has had no vivid and general religious consciousness ever since.

Meanwhile, the deep-lying forces which had separated the national elements of European life were expressing themselves in other spheres. Philosophy and literature were subjected to new tests ; but the Renaissance now proceeded in a world in which religion had suffered a severe blow. Progressive thought became increasingly secular in tone, until in the nineteenth century there awoke a furious conflict between the defenders of theology and the armies of science. The affirmations of the Church were rudely seized upon and dissected. The Bible and Church history were placed beneath the fierce rays of modern research, until it began to look as if no positive religious truth could remain. It was a period of mental distress for people of religious temperament, and some of us will bear in our souls for ever the marks of that conflict. The battle, however, is over. Religion has won. Biblical science,

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historical criticism and philosophy are resounding positive notes of reconstruction at the precise moment when the nations of Europe, brought to the dreadful issue of their too exclusive separation, are hungering and thirsting for some international reconstruction.

It is the Church's plain duty to lead the way to a world, more liberally based and more richly endowed than that of Mediævalism, but more securely welded in religious communion than the world that succeeded Mediævalism. The crying need upon every hand is for synthesis, for re-combination, and the first necessity is for the Church to heal her own divisions that the power of the Gospel may be apparent as a superhuman energy, moulding the life of man into complete society. And for us there is the problem of bringing into the City of God the gifts of Methodism, while adding to them the graces from which the strenuous analysis of history has too long separated us.

We must remember what Methodism is. It did not arise in special witness against a perverted and stagnant Catholicism ; but rather, indeed, against a secularized and somnolent Protestantism. But it was a revival of that mystical element without which no Church can truly flourish, and its assertions are simply not concerned with sectarianism. *The New History of Methodism* points out that by spiritual descent John Wesley was a High Churchman as against Calvinism as usually interpreted, and that Methodism was in its roots Catholic. It certainly brought back the ecstatic joy which Fra Angelico painted, and which had once filled the sanctuaries of Europe with gorgeous colour and great anthems

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of triumph ; though even the impulse of Methodism could not lift modern England to that level. For one reason it was mostly domiciled amongst the very poor ; and by the time it became respectable it had begun to lose its gaiety. But if the whole theological atmosphere of Free Church life in this country has undergone a great change since the eighteenth century, that result is largely to be attributed to the Methodist revival which restored the evangelical note which has its roots in Catholicism.

Technically speaking, we are neither Nonconformists, Dissenters, Sectaries nor Separatists. We are the people called Methodists. The fires of religion, damped down by the Elizabethan Settlement and by the Calvinistic sectarianism which that Settlement provoked, gleamed out once or twice—as in the Caroline divines and a few great Puritan preachers—but only to be smothered again by secular circumstance ; but at length the flame awoke in the heart of John Wesley, and its generous warmth cheered the soul of England. Wesley made no quarrel with the Church of his baptism. He was no small sectarian. He has been called the central figure of the eighteenth century in this country. We must recall his scholarship and his friendships. Specially we must remember the atmosphere of awe which he carried : his dislike of crude excitement : his touch of true churchly dignity. He was no clown or charlatan, and if he were here to-day he would be thinking big thoughts. What we have now to do is to restore the gifts which he rescued from threatened destruction, to their rightful place in the life of the Church Universal ; but this involves

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their organic connection with those still necessary parts of the Catholic faith and practice from which they had once been allowed to fall.

You see what this means. It means preserving the old things of our treasure, and bringing forth what for us are new things. This, of course, will not carry us back to some supposedly ideal state from which the Church slipped in the past. The analysis and isolation of elements has not been pure loss. The new synthesis of sacramental practice with evangelical freedom now desired will possess a richer content than has ever been known before : just as the internationalism we are seeking will be a deeper and richer unity because of the struggles endured and experience gained in the isolated diversity of nationalism. But we say that the further prolongation of analysis will destroy the very foundation of unity. We need internationalism for the sake of the nations, and we need a new Catholicism for the sake of the various separated Churches.

We know what are the old things we can bring forth without shame in answer to the needs of this age. They are the evangelical, mystical religious passion and the democratic doctrine of the Church. The whole Church needs these things. But what are the new things we have to produce ?

First, we have to cultivate a greater Church-consciousness than we have ever had in our midst. Let us be candid. Methodism has sometimes been small and narrow and provincial in its outlook. We have not always struck the great note. We have shown the disastrous results of spiritual insularity, and to-day we see that even evangelical zeal withers and dies

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when it remains alone. We have taken poor views of the Church as an idea : have been content with a one-eyed vision. We have too often lived a hole-and-corner sort of Church-life. We have cherished foolish antipathies. Like other Free Churches, we have made the mistake of thinking that by abandoning all claims concerning the importance of the Church, we should win men's hearts. We have imagined that the more our services became like public meetings, the more we should win the confidence of plain people. The theory is totally false, and the sooner we get rid of it and renew our acquaintance with the honourable devotions of historic Christianity the better will be our prospects.

We have to hold up to this world the fact of the other world, and to make men know that here, in this Church, there flows the mystic river of supernatural life which entered the world at Bethlehem and has travelled down the ages. We have to integrate ourselves with the historic tradition and to show ourselves indissolubly one with that great brotherhood of many climes and ages, the brotherhood of mankind healed and restored and glorified in Christ. For in Christ men are saved, not into spiritual isolation, but into the Communion of Saints. We have to convince men that Christ is our One Foundation and to make this city know that immediately near to it stands the City of God, waiting to be made manifest. And if, by taking from the stream of Catholic life and devotion anything of worth, we may display more clearly our nature as the Church of Christ : if by the use of symbol and the cultivation of sacramental observance we may declare

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Whose we are and Whom we serve, I say that we are free to do so, and that in doing so we shall be true at once to Methodism and to the whole Church. I think this is our own pathway toward reunion : to give to our evangelical, personal witness the expression of corporate life which is its proper completion, and which is declared most wonderfully in the Sacrament of Holy Communion ; and to express our gospel joy by radiant beauty, such as Christian men have normally believed to be the appropriate manifestation of their gladness.

Secondly, we need a newborn and passionate concern with the realities of this world. Men must be assured by us that religion is not a matter of old wives' tales and tea-meetings, but a force capable of revolutionizing and redeeming every department of human existence. May God Almighty deliver us from indifference to what is happening to the bodies and minds of men and women ! It is true that we have to give rest to tired minds and peace to souls distraught. But we have also to nerve men's wills for struggle. The Church is a hospital for sick hearts ; but a hospital is no good unless it is turning men out cured and strong and ready for work. And out of the Church there must go a strong company of men and women to break down oppression, to make rough places plain, to straighten out the moral tangles, to denounce the evil and to defy the darkness of the world.

It ought not to be our task to say merely that the Kingdom of God is at hand. We ought to go out with singing and proclaim that it has come and that the Church is its sign and sacrament. And we

Methodism in the New Age

ought to allow nothing to hold us back from attempting to translate the Church's meaning into our business and our politics and into all our concerns. The Bride of the Lamb, the spouse of the Prince of Peace is the enemy of this world's strife and selfish rivalry and murderous competition. And the world, now sorely stricken for its own sins, awaits her healing ministry. Oh, what a holy commission is ours in this great day ! The voice of God is calling us. The needs of men beckon us. Let us lift our eyes to the vision. Let us thank God for our opportunity. Away with pettiness and stuffiness, and with those miserable small sins which have too often cursed and blighted church-life and estranged the well-disposed. Give us faith and apostolic courage and the spirit of service, and by God's grace this church shall bear a lofty sign for the hope of men and the joy of the saints.

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